

# WORDS AND IDIOMS

*Studies in the English Language*

BY

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## PREFACE

“WORDS,” the poet Donne writes in one of his letters, “are our subtillest and delicatest outward creatures, being composed of thoughts and breath”; and the creatures he thus describes—their echoes and overtones, and the effects which can be produced by the juxtapositions of these wonder-working sounds—have always possessed for me what is perhaps an undue fascination. The art of words, or Literature, as we call it, was, I believed in my youth, an art like the other arts, whose technique could be acquired by study and application; and no one ever told me—as the young are now authoritatively instructed—that if only our thoughts are sincere, and our feelings adequately excited, the right words will rush to our pens without care or trouble. It is my misfortune, I suppose, that having been born before the date of this great labour-saving discovery, I should have spent so much of my time in studying words and reading dictionaries. The human mind, moreover, is so constituted that pursuits which we take up as means to an end, become for us, not infrequently, ends in themselves; the hunter we mount for the chase, often turning, before we know it, into a kind of hobby-horse which gallops off with us

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on unpremeditated expeditions. Nor is there anyone to whom this is more likely to happen than the student of words. A dictionary, as Anatole France has said, is the Universe in alphabetical order ; and the Universe, whatever else may be said in its disparagement, is certainly full of curious facts and details of the most fascinating interest. These facts and these details, moreover, are often called by names which are so odd, and possess such romantic histories, that few can indulge in the joys of *lexicography* without being touched by the word-collecting mania—a mania which, like stamp-collecting, would be one of the most innocent pastimes or vices, were it not so often accompanied by the desire to make a display of one's specimens. There is a peculiar tedium, a special kind of boredom which seems inseparable from books on words, and I certainly never intended to add still another to the many publications of this kind. I have, however, at various dates in the last fifteen years written and printed a number of essays on words ; and if I am now yielding to the temptation to put together in book-form some of these studies, I may perhaps attempt to justify this republication by the fact that my purpose, in the papers printed in this volume, has not been to make a miscellaneous display of curiosities, but rather to use the specimens I have collected as illustrations of certain general ideas, or as proofs of some practical conclusions which seem to me to possess a certain importance.

Being a lexicographer rather than a philologist—if indeed the name of lexicographer may be extended to include those who make compilations from the dictionaries of others—my interest has been more especially



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aroused by two aspects of linguistic study which lie somewhat outside the scope of the strict philologist, into whose special field of enquiry I have not dared to venture. The most important of these aspects is the one which is described by the name of "Semantics," the study of the meanings, rather than of the forms of words ; the history of the terms of our speech with reference to the history of the ideas they embody—the origins, the travels and transformations of these ideas in various epochs and countries. Our modern cosmopolitan civilization is a vast web or tissue of thoughts and inventions, each of which has its place of origin and its special story ; and the names by which these phenomena are designated often turn out to be clues which enable us to unravel, and trace to their sources, the threads out of which this great fabric has been woven. In the first essay in this volume I have attempted such an unravelling in one department of our language which has for me a special interest, the names of the nautical discoveries and inventions which go to make up our vocabulary of English sea-terms.

But far more interesting than the record of man's practical inventions is the record of his thoughts and ideals and ways of feeling. No history is so fascinating, or so important, as the history of the human spirit ; and in the study of words we find a method—a subsidiary method, it may be—but still a method of real value for the purposes of elucidating this history and placing it in a somewhat clearer perspective. This semantic method of study has not hitherto been applied with much profit, owing to the uncollected and often unreliable character of the necessary data—the

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vast number of minute, but important facts which are needed for its adequate exploration. An investigation of this kind has only at last become possible, at least with regard to our own language, since the publication of that great monument of scholarship, the *Oxford Dictionary*, in which we find every English word traced to its source, and all its changes of meaning dated and registered in their chronological order. If I could look forward to another life-time—or to twenty or thirty years of uninterrupted leisure in this present existence—I should like to compile from this great work, and from the dictionaries of other languages, ancient and modern, a history of all the more important terms by which men have designated, not only their discoveries, but also their thoughts and feelings. Since such a study would be largely concerned with the loan-words in the languages of Europe, the terms which have been adopted by different countries to designate the ideas which they have borrowed from each other, I may perhaps claim that in my essay in this volume on *The English Element in Foreign Languages*, I have broken a little fresh ground in one corner of this wide field of study. In the essay which follows on *Four Romantic Words*, I give in more detail the history of certain terms of aesthetic criticism with which our language has enriched the vocabulary of Europe.

The other aspect of language which has engaged my attention is what I may perhaps call its teleological aspect—the study of different forms of speech, not from the point of view of the history embodied in them, but with regard to their value and efficiency as means of expression. As far at least as the borders of this large, and

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as yet almost unexplored, region of speculation I have more than once ventured, and I have been impressed on these expeditions by certain views which I regret that I have not had time to corroborate and elaborate in more detail. If I could hope for still another thirty or forty years of leisure—still another life-time indeed would hardly be adequate for the undertaking—I should very much like to make a comparative study of all the languages of culture, discriminating in each its aesthetic and expressive merits, its harmonies and happy inventions, its fortunate contrivances of grammar and syntax and idiom.

But these are but the daydreams of an ageing lexicographer already much distracted in a world which is full of too many other interests. I shall never write either of these works of research : I have, however, embodied some of my views in a few criticisms of certain prevailing tastes and fashions and false ideals which, in my opinion, are tending at present to hamper and impede the efficiency and development of our own speech. Some of these views have been suggested to me by the writings of the famous Danish linguist, Dr. Jespersen ; others, and in especial the conception of “purity” in language, I owe to Remy de Gourmont’s *Esthétique de la langue française*. My confidence in the validity of some at least of my conclusions has been greatly confirmed by finding them expressed in various tracts of the Society for Pure English. I must, however, be careful to point out that although two of the essays in this volume were first printed in the publications of that Society, I cannot of course claim its approval for all the suggestions

## CHAPTER I

### ENGLISH SEA-TERMS

#### I

IF we take the words in common use among English sailors, the terms, special or general, connected with the sea and ships, we find a vigorous and expressive vocabulary, very characteristic of the hardy and practical people who habitually employ it. And yet if we examine these short and vivid words, which seem so essentially English in their form, and which are now being borrowed from our speech into most of the languages of the world, we shall find that the greater part of them are not of English origin at all. Indeed, anyone with a knowledge of the history of our language will notice, in passing from an agricultural district to the sea-coast, a remarkable change in the terms in common use. While for the barns and buildings inland, the fields, the meadows, the principal crops, agricultural processes, and animals, we should employ, for the most part genuine old English words, our terms for the coast and its main features, for many of the birds above and the fish beneath, for the ships sailing the seas under the British ensign, would prove on examination to be a set of borrowed names of a curiously polyglot

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I have put forward; they are made on my own responsibility, and are without any other endorsement.

The essay on *Sea-Terms* was printed in the *English Review* in 1912; that on the *English Element in Foreign Languages* appeared in *English* in 1919. The paper on *Popular Speech and Standard English* was read to the Yorkshire Dialect Society in 1917; I have considerably enlarged it for publication in this volume. The chapters on *English Idioms* and on *Four Romantic Words* were originally published as tracts of the S.P.E. in 1922 and 1924. All these papers are reprinted here with the usual acknowledgments. The tract on *English Idioms* was edited by the late Dr. Bradley, to whom, and to Professor Graham Wallas, I am indebted for many suggestions. It is considerably longer in its present form, for it is in this paper that I have yielded most unreservedly to the temptation to make a collection of curiosities which should be as complete as possible. If I may be accused of encouraging or inventing a new vice—the mania, or “idiomania,” I may perhaps call it—of collecting what Pater called the “gypsy phrases” of our language, I have at least been punished by becoming one of its most cureless and incorrigible victims.

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mixture, derived ultimately from Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and Dutch sources. These words seem like English words, because English sailors have given them an English shape and an English sound; they come nevertheless from remote countries, and are embedded in our English vocabulary like jetsam washed from afar, but so worn by the waves that it lies almost undistinguishable among the other objects that strew our coasts. But words are like sea-shells; they have their voices, and are full of old echoes; and if we take up these terms, and examine them, and sort them according to their ages and various sources, we find that they have much to tell us of the history of English seamanship. And, moreover, as we examine our sailors' speech, and the way they have fashioned and formed their admirable set of terms, we may come on a lesson or two which will not be without value to those who are concerned with the present state and future prospects of our language.

Our oldest sea-terms divide themselves into two main classes, and are derived from the two far-distant corners of Europe, where, in prehistoric times, men of European races first built themselves ships and ventured on the sea. These places were in the South among the islands and peninsulas of Greece, and in the North along the shores and shallows of the North Sea and the Baltic. From Greece the arts of navigation spread with their appropriate terms over the Mediterranean, while the sailors of the North carried their Teutonic speech along the coasts of the Atlantic. Gradually these two vocabularies met and mingled, and the sea-vocabularies of England and the other European

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countries are largely made up of a mixture of these North Sea and these Mediterranean terms. The most English and anciently established ones in our language are, of course, of Northern origin, and consist of those words which the Angles and Saxons brought with them to England, and which safely survived the Norman Conquest. But among these old inherited terms are a few which, though they belong also to the South, have not been borrowed from thence, but descend to us from a time, thousands of years ago, when the Northern and Southern races dwelt together, and shared in a common language. Indeed, in sorting our words, we must put a few of them aside as belonging to the Aryan speech, from which not only most of the languages of Europe, but those of the Hindoos and Persians, descend. Two words, indeed, connected with some form of navigation have come down from that primitive Indo-European or Aryan language : a term for some simple form of boat (probably a dug-out or hollowed tree), and a name for the paddle with which it was propelled. The name for the canoe we have not inherited directly, but have borrowed it from Greek or Latin in the words *nautical*, *navy*, *navigation*, etc. The Aryan word for a paddle, however, descends to us in our verb to *row*, and also in our word *rudder*, for the primitive rudder was, of course, a paddle or oar ; the fixed stern-rudder being a thirteenth-century invention. After these ancient words the next in antiquity are a few terms common, not to all the Aryan races, but to those of them who settled in Europe. These date from a period, after the separation from the Persian and Indian branches, when the ancestors of Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Celts and

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Slavs all shared more or less in a common language. *Fish* and *salt* are among these "West-Aryan" words, as they are called, and also the old European word for sea (*mare* in Latin, *Meer* in German), which we preserve in our poetic word *mere*, in *marsh*, in the compound *mermaid*, and in names like *Windermere*.

These words, then, *row*, *mere*, *salt*, *fish*, are common to North and South ; our next little heap is exclusively Northern, and is composed of those terms which belong to the Teutonic languages, and descend from that North Sea vocabulary which the English, German, Dutch and Scandinavian races share in common. Here at last we breathe a sea-atmosphere, and find our race embarked in boats with a vocabulary fit for sailors, and many terms for the objects and phenomena with which they are concerned—*islands* and *landmarks*, *winds* and *weather*, the *points of the compass*, and the *birds* and *animals* that haunt the sea. *Sea* and *ship*, *oar*, *mast*, *sail*, *steer*, *flood*, *cliff*, *strand*, *storm*, *North*, *South*, *East* and *West*, *mew* and *seal* and *whale*, are among the words which the Angles and Saxons brought with them in their pirate ships to England, and which they share with their Teutonic cousins ; and we find among them, like a Mediterranean seashell, one word from the distant South. This is the word *anchor*, which the pirates from whom we descend had borrowed, before they came to England, from the Roman sailors who had taught them the use of this contrivance ; their earliest boats being moored, like the Homeric ships, by cables fastened to the shore, or by a stone sunk overboard with a rope attached. For *anchor* is not a Homeric term, but appears in the Greek language at



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a later date ; it is, however, the first Mediterranean word which was added to our English sea-vocabulary, and like many of our words from Greek or Latin, the spelling has been tampered with by pedants, who inserted an *h*, owing to the notion that *anchora* and not *ancora* was the correct form in Latin.

These Mediterranean words are more numerous in the next little heap of our sea-terms, the next layer which we find as we dig down into our old vocabulary. This layer is composed of words which were not, as far as we know, brought by our ancestors to England, but were added to the language during the Anglo-Saxon period, before the Norman Conquest. In this layer we find the famous word *port*, which is borrowed from the Latin *portus*, and is a distant cousin of our Teutonic word *ford*. From the use of *port* as haven or harbour, is probably derived the use of the word for the left side of the ship, which has recently superseded *larboard*, owing to its similarity of sound with *starboard*. *Port* in this sense is found some centuries before its official adoption by the Admiralty in 1844 ; it is supposed to have arisen from the fact that when the steering apparatus was on the right side of the ship, it was convenient, in order to keep this free, to have the port or harbour on the left side when approaching it. Other Mediterranean words borrowed in this period are *lobster*, *limpet*, and *mussel*, and a name for oyster, *ostre*, which however perished later, and was replaced by the French form *oyster*. A taste for the delicacies of the sea is one of the results of civilisation, and our ancestors probably acquired this taste at the time that they were civilised by Christian missionaries—who, moreover, would

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impose on them the necessity of a fish diet in times of fasting. The word *hulk* is also found in English late in this period ; it is a Mediterranean word, widely-diffused in the languages of Western Europe, and is generally supposed to be derived from the Greek *δελφίς*.

These are the Southern sea-words that drifted to our shores in the Anglo-Saxon period. With them we find a few terms apparently of native English origin, *fleet*, and the adjective *afloat*, *neap*, and *starboard*. Starboard is really *steer board*, and means the board or side of the ship on which the *stéor* or paddle was used for steering. This in ancient times was the right side, the Anglo-Saxon name for the left side *bæc-bord*, the side to the back of the steersman, has become obsolete in English, although it still survives in the German *backbord* and the French *bâbord*. *Bæc-bord* was first replaced by *larboard* (which some would derive from the verb to *lade*) and then, as we have seen, by *port*. The important word *boat* we may perhaps claim as a word of English origin—it is first found in Anglo-Saxon, and seems to have been borrowed by the Dutch in the thirteenth century, whence, in the form of *Boet*, it has made its way into German.

These Anglo-Saxon words are known to have been a part of the English nautical vocabulary before the Norman Conquest. The Anglo-Saxons possessed, moreover, a large number of sea-terms which have since perished ; for seamanship, unlike agriculture, has not always been an English occupation, and the English command of the sea is a comparatively late acquisition. The Angles and Saxons were, indeed, sailors and pirates and came to England across the sea, but when they were

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once settled here they abandoned that element ; and while they preserved their farming terms, much of their nautical vocabulary fell into disuse, and was forgotten when their language was partially destroyed. Those which survived have already been mentioned ; but in addition to these sailors have adopted since that date, and still preserve, a number of old words which have otherwise perished or nearly perished in the standard language. Words, like other things, are mortal, and many once of general currency only survive because they are used in some technical vocabulary. *Fore* and *aft* and *abaft*, *sprit*, *cleat*, and *pintle* are among these survivals, and the verb to *belay*, which was used with meaning to “waylay,” as late as the eighteenth century. The old word *lee* is seldom used now except with a nautical meaning, although in the form of *lew* it still preserves in many dialects its old meaning of “protection, shelter,” especially protection from the wind. *Lew* is one of our best dialect words, as beautiful as the warm, sunny, windless nook it so well describes, and a “lew corner” should be found for it in our literary language. *Gangway* is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “road, thoroughfare” ; it survives in English ships, and in the English House of Commons, where we hear of seats above or below the gangway. When, moreover, sailors speak of a ship *heeling* over, or of *faying* planks or timbers, they are using old English verbs ; for *heel* is a transformation of an earlier verb to *heeld*, “to slope or bend downwards,” and *fay* is another old verb meaning “to fit, adopt or join,” and is the same word as the German *fügen*. Both these words are also preserved in the southern dialects of England, where,

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however, *fay* has lost its original signification and now means "to succeed or prosper."

While some words perish in the literary language, others change their original meanings, which, however, are often preserved in technical vocabularies. Thus when we speak of *trimming* a boat, we use the verb to *trim* in the old English sense of preparing or setting in order; and in the sailors' phrase to *bend* a rope, *bend* is used with its old meaning of "fastening, fettering." *Bend* has acquired its current meaning of curving or crooking from archery; as the bow was "bent" or confined with the string, the sense of fastening was changed to that of curving. *Shroud* is one of those words whose meaning has, in the process of time, been much narrowed; on land it is only used now for the garments of the dead, but its earlier and wider signification of "garment, coverings," is preserved on the sea in the name of a ship's *shrouds*.

These words, then, form the main part of the Anglo-Saxon or early English element in our modern nautical vocabulary; some, as we have seen, were nautical terms in Anglo-Saxon times, while others were adopted by sailors at a later period, and preserved by them in their technical vocabulary. We cannot, of course, be certain of the exact date at which any given word is formed or acquires a nautical meaning; the speech of sailors is a spoken, not a written language, and sailors' words were no doubt in many cases used for a long time before they made their appearance in writing; thus the word *amidships* is not found before 1692, although its genitive form (*ships* instead of *ship*) shows that it must have come into use some centuries earlier, and must

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belong to the period when *amid* (which was originally a phrase, "in the middle of," like the Latin *in medio*) was followed by the genitive.

### II

The next layer of our sea-words is, of course, Scandinavian. England was largely settled by Danish sea-pirates ; Viking ships have been unearthed in England ; Alfred's fleet was built on their model, and it was in Viking ships that William the Conqueror crossed from Normandy, and Richard I. and his Crusaders sailed to the Mediterranean. From the speech of these Viking pirates we have inherited, as might have been expected, a number of nautical terms, the *stern* for instance, the *keel*, the *hounds* of the mast, and words like *raft*, *tug* and *windlass*. When we say a ship is *bound* for a certain port, or homeward *bound*, we are using, not the past participle, as we might think, of the English verb to *bind*, but of a Scandinavian word meaning ready or prepared—its derivative, a word which in the form of *boun*, to make ready, still lives on in Northern dialects. *Billow* is probably a Scandinavian word which survived in one of the Northern or Eastern dialects which still preserve so many Danish words ; it made its way into Southern English in the sixteenth century, and was given a literary standing by its use by Spenser and Shakespeare. *Wake* for the track of a ship is another Scandinavian word, preserved in dialect ; its original meaning, as Professor Skeat tells us, was that of an opening in the ice, especially the passage cut for a ship in a frozen lake or sea ; and

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then, from being applied to the smooth watery track left by a ship after its passage through the ice, it came to be used when there was no ice at all. This useful word is one of the nautical terms which the French have borrowed from English, although it is not easy to recognise it at first in its French form of *ouaiche* ; and it is still used on the Norfolk Broads with its original meaning of an open place in the ice.

These Scandinavian words, like the old English, were partly nautical in their origin, partly words adopted at various times into the nautical vocabulary ; and with them also, it is not possible, owing to the absence of records, to fix the exact date of their adoption and common use. This is also true of the next great and important stratum in our sea-vocabulary, the large number of nautical words which we have inherited from the French of the Norman Conquerors. Although the Northern sailors who conquered Normandy and afterwards England, were of a Scandinavian race, they lost during the century and a half they spent in France almost all traces of their Scandinavian speech, and, with the exception of a few nautical terms, such as the fish-name *flounder*, and perhaps *equip*, the language they brought to England was that of France, and their sea-speech as they sailed over in their Viking ships was French and not Scandinavian. Many of our principal sea-terms, therefore, have come to us across the Channel from France—brought hither either by the Normans, or borrowed afterwards in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Very few of these words are, however, of native French origin. The French sea-vocabulary is itself, like the English, of a borrowed and composite

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character, being formed in the first place of Mediterranean words, to which have been added a number of North Sea terms, brought with them by the tribes from Germany who invaded France in early times. But the terms we borrowed from France and still use, are for the most part from the South, and belong to that collection of sea-terms which the Southern nations—French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—possess in common.

### III

This Mediterranean sea-vocabulary, composed of words still in daily use among Southern sailors, is full of an historical and almost romantic interest. Various nations at various times have filled this Southern sea with their shipping, and established their dominion over its ports and coasts ; and each of these sea-empires, or “Thalassocracies,” as modern scholars call them, has imposed its language upon sailors of other nations, and left, when its ships decayed, and its power vanished, a deposit of words in the speech of all the peoples who navigate those waters. The first Mediterranean sea-empire of which language gives us definite knowledge, is the Greek—how much the Greeks in their turn owed to the still earlier Phœnician navigators, the traders and pirates of Tyre and Sidon, is a point which is somewhat disputed—at any rate, no sea-terms can be traced with any certainty to these prehistoric sailors. But already in Homer we find a highly developed vocabulary of nautical terms. From this Homeric vocabulary three words have come to us by way of France, *dolphin* and *prow*, and *ocean*, the Homeric

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name for the great stream supposed to encompass the disk of the earth. The Homeric name for ship, *naus*, is represented in our words *nautical* and *nausea*; and the dialect *quant*, used on the East Coast for a long punting pole, is perhaps descended from the *κοντός*, the pole with which the Homeric sailors pushed their ships from shore. *Anchor*, which came to us at such an early date, is, as we have seen, a post-Homeric term, and other sea-words from Greece which we still use are *pirate* and *conger* and *oyster* and *seine*. *Seine* is derived through the Latin *sagena* from *σαγήνη*, the Greek name for a drag-net; and as it is found in Anglo-Saxon and other Teutonic languages, it is probably, like *anchor*, a word borrowed by our ancestors before they came to England.

Rome succeeded Greece in the Empire of the Mediterranean; but the Romans were not naturally sailors, and their sea-terms were for the most part borrowed from their Greek predecessors. They, however, have also left their deposit in the Mediterranean vocabulary. *Poop* from *puppis*, and the verb to *careen*, are words from classical Latin, words used by Virgil; and *corvette* is derived through French and Spanish, from *corbita*, the Latin name for a slow-sailing ship of burden—so called, it is believed, from the basket (*corbis*) hoisted by the Egyptian grainships as an ensign. The Aryan name for a boat or canoe comes to us, in its Latin form *navis*, in our words *navy* and *navigation*, and the West-Aryan word for sea (our *mere*) appears in its Latin form *mare*, in our words *marine*, *mariner*, *maritime*, and also in the *cormorant* or *corvus marinus*, the sea-crow. After Rome, the Byzantine Empire was the next sea-power



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in the Mediterranean, and from Byzantine Greek we inherit *gulf*, and perhaps the word *pilot*, which superseded our native English *lodesman* in the sixteenth century. After Byzantium the Arabs won for a while the sea-supremacy in the South, and from them the important word *admiral* is derived. Other words which have been traced with less certainty to Arabic sources are the verb to *furl*, and *average*, which was originally a Mediterranean term for a duty or tax on merchandise. The Italians, with their fleets from Venice and Pisa and Genoa, were the next great sea-power of the South, and their importance as sailors, and the extent and duration of their empire, have left an enduring mark upon the sea-vocabulary of modern nations. Several of our names for different kinds of sailing ships are derived from Italian : *brigantine* and *brig* and *frigate* and *pinnacle* are Italian words ; *skiff* is derived from our Teutonic word *ship* in its Italian form, and *bark* is also perhaps Italian, and derived from the late Latin *barca*—a word from which *barge* and *bargain* are also derived, and which some etymologists trace to a Celtic, some to an Egyptian source. These names for ships have for the most part changed their meaning as old types became obsolete and new ones were developed ; our modern barks, brigs, and frigates have little connection with the craft that originally bore these names—the ships perish, but the names survive, like shells, which, after the death of their builders, remain to be the hosts of new inhabitants. Other Italian words in our sea-vocabulary are *mizen*, *quarantine*, and *squadron* ; *compass* and *cable* and *cape* and *galley* are Mediterranean words of late formation, which are

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found in Italian, and have perhaps come to us from an Italian source.

These words form the Mediterranean element in the French sea-vocabulary, and all of them, Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Italian, have come to us by way of France. But a large proportion of the words used by French sailors come from the North Sea, and are German in origin—*havre* and *mât*, *falaise* and *flot*, *Nord*, *Sud*, *Est* and *Ouest*, and many other terms show the sea-knowledge brought to France by its early invaders from the North. The fact that in French, and also in Italian, the word for tacking or sailing into the wind (*louvoyer*, *bordeggiare*) are of Northern origin, has been regarded as a proof that this part of the nautical art was unknown to early Mediterranean sailors, but learnt by them from Northern seamen. Among the Teutonic words which have come to us from France may be mentioned *aboard*, and the verb to *haul*.

In the North the sea-empire of the Scandinavian Vikings was followed by that of the Low Germans and the Dutch. From the time of the early Middle Ages the great sailors and merchants in Northern seas came from the towns of the Hanseatic League in North Germany, and from the Netherlands, and English sailors began in early times to borrow nautical terms from these Low German and Dutch seamen, who so far surpassed them in the arts of navigation. As Dutch and Low German are nearly related, and possess many words in common, it is not easy to determine the exact source of these early borrowings—*tackle*, one of the earliest of them, is apparently Low German; *skipper* (from *schip*) is perhaps Dutch; while *mate* and *bowsprit*

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may be from either dialect. All these words are found in English before the year 1400. In the fifteenth century, when English shipping became of more importance, our sailors borrowed from their still superior Dutch rivals a large number of nautical terms, and among the words found at this time, and regarded with more or less certainty as being of Dutch origin, are *buoy*, *deck*, *freight*, *marline*, *orlop*, and the names of boats, *hoy* and *lighter*. The words *pump* and *leak*, which are first found in English in connection with nautical matters, are also perhaps borrowings from Dutch sailors.

The borrowing of nautical terms from the Dutch has gone on till very recent times, and was especially frequent in the seventeenth century, during the naval wars and maritime rivalry of the two nations; and in this period are found the following words, which have been traced, with more or less certainty, to a Dutch origin, *bow*, *boom*, *taffrail*, *cuddy*, *sloop*, *yacht*, *cruise*, *cruiser*, *awast*, and the verbs *to reeve* and *to gybe*. *Commodore* is believed to have been introduced from Dutch by William III., and the nautical use of the old feudal and law-French word *to seize*, "to seize a rope," is perhaps derived from a similar use of the word among Dutch sailors. The verb *to splice* is another Dutch word found in English in the seventeenth century, and *caboose*, *companion*, *lugger*, *smack*, and *scow*, and the verb *to marl*, which belong to the next century, have also been traced to Dutch sources. The fact that so many of our nautical words, and the greater part of our names for various kinds of sailing vessels, have come to us from the Low Countries, is a proof of that great superiority of the Dutch in ship-building

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and navigation, which lasted for so long, and did so much to give its present character to English seamanship. These Dutch terms are, for the most part, of Teutonic origin ; and some of them are words which we have also inherited, but which have been given a nautical meaning in the Low Countries ; *boom*, for instance, is the Dutch form of our word *beam*, and *bow* is a variant of the English *bough*. But the Dutch sailors also borrowed some Scandinavian, French, and Mediterranean terms ; a *reef* in a sail and a *reef* in the sea are both from the Scandinavian *rif*, a rib ; the first may have come to us directly, while the second was probably borrowed from Dutch or Low German sailors ; words like *buoy*, *quartermaster*, and *companion* (in its nautical use) are of Southern origin, but it is probable that they came to England from Holland.

While the Dutch were the sailors of the North Atlantic, the Portuguese, and then the Spaniards, established sea-empires in Southern waters, extending to India in the East and America in the West. The word *corvette*, as we have seen, was borrowed from Spanish into French, and among the words taken by English sailors direct from Spanish may be mentioned *binnacle*, *flotilla*, *stevedore*, *cargo*, and *tornado* and *embargo*. But the most interesting part of the Spanish element in our nautical vocabulary is composed of those words which were brought to England by the Elizabethan pirates and adventurers who followed and fought the Spaniards in the Spanish Main, and learnt from them the strange terms, *hurricane*, *hammock*, and *canoe*, which they, in their turn, had learnt from the native tribes of the West Indian islands. *Breeze*, too, is a Spanish word, and

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was used originally, the *Oxford Dictionary* tells us, for North-East winds, especially for the North-East trade wind in the Spanish Main. *Launch* is a name for a boat picked up by Portuguese sailors in the East (it is probably of Malay origin), and handed on by them to Spanish sailors, from whom it was borrowed into English. It is quite different in origin from the verb to *launch*, which is derived from the Norman-French form of the verb *lancer*.

### IV

Thus we see how all the thalassocracies, or sea-empires, which have succeeded each other in the course of history, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arabian, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish in the South, and Teutonic, Scandinavian, Low German, and Dutch in the North, have left their deposit of sea-terms in the vocabulary of our English sailors, and how rich are the elements of historical association in these sea-borne words, washed to our shores from distant ports, once flourishing but now decayed.

Of all these great sea-empires of the world, the most recent and the greatest is the British ; and English sailors, since the establishment of their sea-supremacy, no longer borrow their terms from abroad ; they form them at home, and impose them on foreign nations. The speech of sailors all over the world is becoming more and more English in character ; and linguistic patriots, alarmed for the so-called purity of their native forms of speech, have begun to protest against this invasion of British words. But we may be sure that

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their protests will be in vain, for just as Englishmen in the past borrowed from the languages of those nations who were superior to them in the arts of shipbuilding and navigation, so foreign nations will continue to borrow from English, as long as English sailors maintain their supremacy at sea.

This export of English sea-terms assumed no great proportions before the era of steamships in the nineteenth century, although before that time a few of our words found their way into the vocabularies of French and German. The early English word *boat* (if indeed it be English) has already been mentioned; another apparently English formation, *flag*, is found in all the Teutonic languages; and the German name for pilot, *Lotse*, is believed by German philologists to be derived from our earliest *lodesman*, which we abandoned for the Mediterranean word *pilot*. French sailors borrowed in the Middle Ages the words *haddock* (*hadot*) and *ling* (*lingue*); *shore* and *flyboat* reach them in the sixteenth century in the forms of *accore* and *flibot*; and in the next hundred years the Dutch words *yacht* and *commodore* were taken from English, while *handspike* and *ketch* were transformed into *anspect* and *quaiche*. The next important English word to find its way abroad is *log*, for the log, or piece of wood fastened to a line to measure the rate of sailing, appears to have been an invention of English sailors in the sixteenth century, and the word is found in German, Danish, Swedish, and also in French, where it has taken the form of *loch*. Our seventeenth-century word *packet-boat* (originally, a boat for carrying the "packet" of State letters and despatches) was also borrowed by the French and

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Germans, and is familiar to us in the French form of *paquebot*. *Brick* (*brig*), *lougre* (*lugger*), *cotre* (*cutter*), *sloop* and *schooner* are other names of sailing-ships borrowed into French from English. Curiously enough, at least three words, *cabin*, *mess* and *furl*, seem to have come into England from France, and, after English sailors had given them an English form and a nautical meaning, to have made their way back again into the language from which we borrowed them.

During the nineteenth century English sea-terms were borrowed by foreign sailors in large numbers, and a protest has been recently raised in France against them ; but the greatest sufferers from this invasion are the Germans, and the pre-war developments of the German navy and merchant-shipping led to the borrowing of English sea-terms in a wholesale manner. An examination of any recent German dictionary of nautical terms will show the great extent of this borrowing, and how it has immensely increased in recent years, in spite of the efforts of patriotic Germans to counteract it. These efforts were led by the *Allgemeiner Deutsche Sprachverein*, a society which was formed in 1885 to purify the German language, and which claims to have done much, with the help of the Government, the newspapers, and the educated classes, to replace borrowed terms by words of native formation. If we are to judge by the publications of this society, Germany was for many years before the war threatened by an invasion of English methods, English ideals, and English terms in all departments of life ; in 1899 the *Sprachverein* passed, in the form of a resolution, a warning to patriotic Germans, urging them to resist the growth of English

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influence, and to fight against this invasion of English words. In the same year they published a tract, *Engländerei in der deutschen Sprache*, and ten years later this was amplified and republished, and the book is now before me. One section of it is concerned with sea-terms, and its author gives from various German nautical vocabularies a long list of words which have been borrowed from the English language.<sup>1</sup>

The author has, however, omitted to mention the curious fact that the English surname of Lloyd has become a name for a steamship company, as in the *Bremer Lloyd*, the *Norddeutscher Lloyd*, and is also used in compounds like *Lloydampfer*.

It is possible, as some believe, that English is destined to become a universal language, and that the flooding of the languages of the world with English sea-terms is the beginning and rising tide of this process. Or it may be that the English sea-empire is destined to share the fate of the great empires of the past, and to leave in the sea-languages of the world, as these have done, a deposit of English terms as a memorial of its vanished greatness and dominion. But whatever the future may hold, there is one lesson which we may learn with profit from the past and from the present character of our

<sup>1</sup> *Bilge, Brigg, Bunker, Centreboard, Dock, Donkey, Ekonomiser, Fender, Gig, Hiel, Hurricane-Deck, Jiggermast, Klipper, Kommodore, Kove, Kriek, Kutter, List, Lugger, Messe, Pancakes, Pijacke (pea-jacket), Pier, Pitchpine-Holz, Poop, Propeller, Shaping-Maschine, Skiff, Skylight, Skysail, Steerage, Stern, Storekeeper, Stringer, Surf, Tandem-Maschine, Tank, Tankschiff, Tender, Topp (of a mast), Törn (turn), Track, Tramp, Transmitter, Trawl, Trimm, Trunk, Trysegeel, Twist, Yellow-metall, and Yellow-pine.* In addition to this large and miscellaneous collection of nouns, the verbs *chartern, dippen, docken, jumpen, listen, loggen, pullen, schiften, trimmen* and several others are mentioned.



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sea-vocabulary. The English language is of a composite character ; for many centuries it has enriched itself by borrowing terms from foreign languages, and this process will no doubt continue in the future. How should we treat these foreign invaders ? Should we turn them into natives, or should we preserve as far as possible their alien character and sound ? The modern tendency is to use these words in their foreign form, and to preserve the foreign spelling and the foreign pronunciation of the vowels and consonants. This tendency is to be regretted from many points of view, for words of difficult pronunciation put an unnecessary burden on English tongues ; and terms, moreover, which we borrow, but do not naturalize, are apt to be short-lived, and to perish from our language, and thus our speech tends to lose expressions which would add to its richness and variety. In old days, when words were borrowed, not from books, but from living speech, little or no attempt was made to preserve their foreign appearance ; they soon were translated into English form and sound, and made thoroughly natural and at home. It is owing to this old assimilative power that the English language, in spite of its polyglot sources, has been handed on to us with so native and genuine and English a character and sound.

### V

We most of us believe ourselves to be concerned about the preservation of the English language, and every now and then some eminent person writes a grave letter to the papers and warns us that its purity

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is threatened by this or that new development which they happen to dislike. It would be easy to show from the record of these protests in the past, or from a criticism of those which have been made in more recent years, that the "purists" are almost always wrong—that their condemnations and fulminations are little more than outbursts of blind prejudice, being based neither on a knowledge of the past history of our speech, nor any sound conception of what pure English really is. For what after all is purity in language? The German notion that it consists in the expulsion of terms borrowed from foreign sources, and their replacement by native compounds, is at best a questionable one, and, in spite of our Anglo-Saxon enthusiasts, can have but a limited application to our speech—we have drunk too long and too deep of southern vintages to restrict ourselves now to northern brewings. It is true indeed that owing to our wholesale importations from abroad, terms of native manufacture, and in especial English compounds, are unduly handicapped—words like *aviator*, *aeronaut* and *aeroplane*, are swallowed at once, without question, while *airman* or *airplane* have to fight hard for survival. But it is the ancient custom of our speech to take what words it needs freely from foreign sources, and to give them, as we have given our borrowed sea-terms, English shapes and sounds. It is by means of this process of assimilation that we have preserved in the past the purity of our language—purity meaning for us homogeneity of speech, or if that word is too cumbrous, we may perhaps borrow from the editor of the *Oxford Dictionary* the slightly less cumbrous word "anglicity," to define this

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ideal of purity, or press the word "integrity" into our service. By the "purity" of an English word, its homogeneity, its anglicity, we would mean then, not its Teutonic pedigree, but, whatever its source, its conformity in sound and shape with the core of the language, and its complete and satisfactory assimilation.<sup>1</sup>

This assimilative power belongs not to the educated classes, but to practical and unlettered people; and nowhere can we study its working better than in the speech of sailors and fishermen, who are not troubled by any ideal of "correctness," and transform all their borrowings, gathered from almost all quarters of the world, into words which seem thoroughly native and at home. But sailors, like all true language-makers, carry this process of assimilation still further. They are often not content with translating foreign words into sounds congenial to English ears, and suitable to English tongues, but like, when possible, to change them to look like words with an English meaning. Thus *halier* was transformed by sailors into *halyard*, by association with the old English word *yard*, the Dutch *taffereel* (a little table or picture) has become *taffrail*, as if named from the rail above the carved or ornamented part of the ship's stern, which originally

<sup>1</sup> M. Remy de Gourmont in his *Esthetiques de la langue Française*, has expounded with reference to the French language, this ideal of purity, and it has been accepted as satisfactory, I believe, by the best French linguists. Purity in French, he says, consists in assimilation, and the French words are "pure" words which have undergone those modifications, and changes in shape and sound by which the French language has been created out of Latin. Impure words, on the other hand, are those which have been taken over by scholars and scientists from the classical or modern languages without assimilation.

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bore this designation ; and the Spanish *bitacula* (from *habitaculum*) has, through *bittacle*, become *binnacle*, as if it was connected with our English word *bin*. This method of punning or popular etymology often leads to somewhat absurd results, for any kind of meaning, however inappropriate, will do, so long as there is a similarity of sound. The word, it is felt, must mean something, even if the meaning have no connection with the object or process which it describes. So the *houns* of a mast (a Scandinavian word) have been changed into *hounds*, and the *jury-mast*, derived perhaps from an old French word *ajurie* (*adjutare*), has been given a name which may well puzzle anyone who tries to discover its meaning. An absurd and recent pun of this kind is found in the phrase to *scandalize*, or reduce the area of the sail, for the origin of this inappropriate verb is to be found in the older word *scantelize*.

But the genius for language of English sailors shows itself not only in their power of assimilating foreign terms, but in their faculty of creating them when necessary. The native words which appear to have been formed in Anglo-Saxon times have already been mentioned ; and *cod*, *haddock*, *prawn*, are first found in medieval English ; *jib*, *ripple*, *berth*, *awning* appear in the seventeenth century, while *bunk* and *capsize* and *burgee* are of more recent formation. These words have come into being in ways which baffle etymologists, and some at least of them look like fresh creations—living words, fresh-minted by the fishermen and sailors, who preserve that power of word-creation which belongs to the unlettered classes, and which, still active in spoken dialects and the speech of various trades and sports,

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provides that rich choice of vivid terms by which standard languages are nourished and replenished. The word *beach*, for instance, is a dialect word native to the coasts of Kent and Sussex, where it is still used with its original meaning of shingle or sea-worn pebbles, used for "beaching" paths and roads. One of the most important of our new nautical terms, *schooner*, has come from New England, and, like the nineteenth-century *clipper*, remains in our vocabulary as a token of that pre-eminence in the arts of shipbuilding which the Americans won and held so long. Schooners were first built, or at least first came into extensive use, in the American colonies, and the story is well known of the bystander at the launching of the earliest of these American vessels, who exclaimed, "Oh ! how she scoons !" whereupon her builder answered, "A scooner let her be." Etymologies depending on anecdotes of this kind are justly regarded with considerable suspicion, and there is no evidence that the Northern dialect word, to *scoon* or *scun*, "to skim along the water," was ever used in New England ; but at present this explanation holds the field, as no better one has been suggested.

The home-made character of English sea-terms which has been so strongly marked since the establishment of the English sea-supremacy, is fully apparent in the more recent additions to our nautical vocabulary. Our terms connected with steam navigation, *steamboat*, *steamer*, *liner*, *paddle*, *propeller*, *screw*, and *funnel* are modern English formations, or the application of words long naturalised in our language ; and those excellent compounds, *lifeboat*, *searchlight*, and *ironclad* are a proof that our sailors preserve that word-making faculty,

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and that love for simple and easily comprehended terms, which seems, if we are to judge by recent additions to the language, to be dying out in most other classes of Englishmen. The word last mentioned, *ironclad*, is a good instance of the happy exercise of this faculty. When during the Crimean War ships protected by iron or steel armour were first built in France, and almost immediately afterwards in England, a large number of adjectives, as the *Oxford Dictionary* tells us, were used to describe them : *iron-* or *steel-* or *armour-plated*, *-cased*, *-clothed*, *-sided*, and many others, and *iron-plated* was the official adjective until 1866. But among these adjectives *ironclad* had also been used ; and as this term, unlike *iron-plated*, could be easily employed as a noun, the common sense of sailors (apparently first in America) adopted it, and it has now vanquished its competitors in this interesting verbal struggle for survival. 'This sailors' luck or inspiration has also added, in quite recent times, a magnificent new word to our nautical vocabulary ; for when the first of the great new battleships was given the historic name of "Dreadnought," a name was chosen which could easily become a class-name, and is now used to describe a special class of battleship ; and we have forgotten that the word was in earlier and humbler use for a thick cloak or waterproof. Another recent enrichment of the language is the great word *battleship*, contracted from the older *line-of-battle ship*, and this formation would appear to be a very new one, as *battleship* is not found in the *Oxford Dictionary*.

One trembles to think of what our names for these new vessels would have become, had their baptism been

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left to the learned inventors and men of science to whom, on land, we entrust the duty of providing us with new terms. If we are to judge by words like *cinematograph* and terms of aviation, *hydro-aeroplane*, etc., a steamer would have been called a *pyroscaphe* (like the Italian *piroscafo*), or an *athmoploion*, after the example of modern Greek ; for *battleship* we should have had a word like *polemoscaphe* perhaps ; while an ironclad might have increased its formidable character under the name of *siderozone* or *siderochiton*, or if we preferred a hybrid, *ferropleuk*. That words like *steamer*, *ironclad*, *Dreadnought*, *battleship* are to be preferred to these Greek compounds, few would question ; we ought indeed to keep them before us as models of what new English words should be ; and as the safety and independence of the English nation is committed to the care of the English fleet, so we might also do worse than entrust the care of the English language to her seamen, in the confidence that they would preserve its national character better than we on land seem to be performing that necessary task.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ENGLISH ELEMENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

I HAVE mentioned in the last chapter some of the English sea-terms which have been adopted into the vocabularies of foreign countries. But in addition to sea-terms, our language has contributed many other words to continental vocabularies : we often come across these in foreign books and newspapers, where they make on us a curious impression of mingled familiarity and strangeness. Sometimes, as in *gin*, *sport*, *gentleman*, they keep their English forms ; others have acquired foreign shapes ; our *pudding* has become *porridge* in French, *podingo* in Italian, *tramway* is *tranvia* in Spanish, and *boycott*, *boikottirovat* in Russian. Or we can recognize English compounds which have been translated—*aussperren* for *lock-out* in German, *bola negra* for *blackball* in Spanish. In the linguistic adventures abroad of our English words there is much that is curious, but their borrowing has more than a linguistic importance. When we examine the English element in the French language, we find that it is for the most part composed of words like *jury*, *budget*, *sport*, *fashion*, *comfort*, which are French in origin, but which have returned to France with English meanings acquired



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during their sojourn in this country. And here we come on the really interesting part of our curious subject; for it is after all on account of their meanings, and not their forms, that these words and not others have been borrowed by our continental neighbours. They represent special products of English life for which other languages possessed no terms, and stand both for English characteristics which foreigners have observed, and for objects, institutions, customs and ideas of English origin which they have imitated.

Much has been written about national character, and the influence of various nations on each other. We know of course that all the countries of Europe have developed on more or less different lines ; and that each, owing to race, climate and historical causes, has produced its own form of civilization, and that these have often influenced each other ; and that the history of one country must be studied with reference to that of its neighbours. We know also that the various Western nations share in a common civilization to which, in varying degrees, they have all contributed.

The study of this European civilization, its origin, and growth, and the contributions made to it by different nations and races, is unfortunately one of those subjects which, in Buckle's phrase, although they are not wanting in certainty, yet lack precision. There is a sad want of concrete and definite facts, anything we can take hold of and date and measure. Estimates of national character are apt to be little more than expressions of individual opinion or prejudice ; and they are often so vague or so contradictory, that sceptics have questioned whether there was really any such thing as national

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character at all. And yet we feel that the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, the Italian, are all very different types, although their exact differences may elude our attempts at definition. And when we approach the history of European culture we find ourselves in a cloudy realm full of vague generalizations and vast conclusions ; and even in the study of comparative literature the same lack of precision baffles us, for literary influences are subtle matters, and it is difficult to trace them very exactly.

But these are all questions which are too important to be neglected ; the historians of the future must be largely concerned with the history of international culture, and the study of those nations and races by which it has been created. The subject will, no doubt, be approached in different ways ; and among these it may turn out that the most definite, and perhaps not the least fruitful in results, will be that of language. For not only is the collective spirit of a nation more completely embodied and expressed in the national form of speech than in any other way, but the influence of the language of one country on that of another is an influence that can be accurately traced, and it is always a sure proof of some sort of relation between the two countries. The French, the Italian, the Dutch elements in our English vocabulary are clear indications of what we have borrowed from those countries ; and if we isolate and study the English element in continental languages, we may hope to find it an expression of English character, and an indication of the contribution which our race has made to the civilization of Europe—of the special domains of human activity

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in which it has been most fertile in ideas. This linguistic method of study may prove itself in some ways inadequate; it may fail us at certain points, but it will at least be based on definite facts, and will bring something objective and capable of test into a region too much given over to patriotism, prejudice and mere opinion.

In examining the words borrowed from our language it is necessary, however, to make certain distinctions; they fall into different classes, and all of these are not of equal importance for our purpose. First of all there is a number of exotic terms whose origin and character are not English, although they have reached the continent through the medium of our language. Among these are terms from India like *calico*, *shampoo*, *veranda*, the West Indian *mahogany*, and other exotic words like *albatross*, *alligator*, *gutta-percha*, *tatoo*, *taboo*, and *totem*. Then there is a second class of international words whose English provenance is also more or less accidental. This class consists of terms deliberately coined by individuals, for the most part men of science; they are made up of Greek or Latin elements, and belong to the language of European thought, rather than to the specifically English vocabulary. They are hardly national products, but the coinages of individual Englishmen, like Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Napier's *logarithm*, Bentham's *international*, and others of the same character, *electricity*, *cyclone*, *eugenics*, *kaleidoscope*, and the trade terms, *celluloid*, *linoleum*. These terms, save as far as they show the trend of English thought, and the special domains in which it has made discoveries, are also not of much importance for our purpose.

More significant are what we may call travellers'

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terms, words like *alderman*, *coroner*, *clergyman*, *Dissenter*, *Quaker*, *Presbyterian*, *Miss*, *policeman*, *Tory*, *Whig*, *Squire*, which are used by foreigners who have visited England, or by writers who have described English life. These possess a certain national interest, as they describe the impressions of foreign observers. But the most interesting, and for our purpose the most important, class of English words in foreign languages, are those which have been borrowed abroad with the objects, the institutions, the ways of thought and feeling they describe. These are the words which have been most thoroughly assimilated and most completely incorporated into foreign speech, and they are the surest indices by which we can trace our contributions to the civilization of Europe. But for an adequate treatment of our subject we must not confine ourselves merely to the borrowing of English words. There are many cases where not the word itself, but its English meaning, has been borrowed; where words already established in the European vocabulary have acquired a special significance in this country which has then been added to this foreign meaning. The word *ballade* for instance has two meanings in French and German, one of which is continental, and the other English; and the old French word *record* has lost its ancient use, which has been replaced by the signification which it has acquired in England as a term of sport.

Taking then as the English element in foreign languages both the words and the meanings borrowed from our speech, we are struck, first of all, by the large number of political terms which it contains—by the importance of the English words relating to politics

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which have been domiciled abroad. That the words *committee, jury, budget, meeting, speech, pamphlet*, have been borrowed, not only in France, but in other countries, is a remarkable evidence of the impression made by the English methods of free government and free political discussion, and the way in which these methods have been imitated by other nations. But in the cases where meanings, but not words, have made their way abroad the evidence is even more striking, for it is in England that the great words *constitution, represent, representative, vote*, have acquired the special meanings which they now possess in the vocabulary of Europe—meanings not found in their earlier uses, and not always implied in their etymological origin. In the earlier instances of the word *constitution*, both in England and abroad, there is no suggestion of the limitation of arbitrary power ; the words *represent* and *representative* acquired their present signification in England at about the time of the Commonwealth.

Even the great word *Parlement*, as the French now use it, derives its modern meaning from this country. *Parlement* was indeed the French name, in early times, for the assembly of the great men of the kingdom ; but it became narrowed in meaning afterwards, and was used for a certain number of the Supreme Courts of Justice, in which the edicts of the King were registered. But in England the Parliaments or great Councils of the Plantagenet Kings developed in the course of history into that modern two-chamber institution which most foreign nations have imitated, borrowing with it the English meanings of the words *parliament* and *parliamentary*.

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Other old French words which have acquired new and English meanings in the same manner are the parliamentary terms *address*, *motion*, *majority*, *minority*, *opposition*, *indemnity*, *obstruction*, *radical*, *conservative*.<sup>1</sup> Among political terms less strictly parliamentary may be mentioned the words *agitation* and *agitator*, which first became popular at the time of the "agitation" for Catholic emancipation. From this movement, and also from the English anti-slavery movement, is derived the popularity of the great watchword *emancipation*, and its application to the oppressed races of Europe.<sup>2</sup> More recently the modern terms *Nationalism* and *Nationalist* have been adopted from Irish politics as party names in other countries; *boycott* has spread over almost all the world; *Imperialism*, formerly used for the Napoleonic form of government in France, has acquired abroad the new and English meaning of extension of empire over inferior races, while *colonize* and *colonization* are borrowings of an earlier date. We see therefore from our linguistic picture that the English are eminently a political people, who have

<sup>1</sup> My lists of political and other English terms which have been borrowed abroad are by no means exhaustive. Since this chapter was written, M. Paul Barbier has published in the S.P.E. Tracts VII. (1921) and XIII. (1923), much more extensive lists of English words in the French language, with lexicological and textual notes of great interest. He gives, for instance, in addition to the above terms, whose political meaning is derived from England, the following: *ajourner*, *ajournement*, *amender*, *amendement*, *coalition*, *dissoudre*, *dissolution*, *exécutif*, *législatif*, *legislature*, *liste civile*, *proroger*, *prorogation*, *quorum*, *session*.

<sup>2</sup> M. Barbier adds to this class of terms the important words, *patriote*, *patriotisme*, *esprit public*, *républicanisme*, and the use of the adjective *oppressif* for government and taxation. All these were eighteenth-century borrowings.

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originated and developed institutions and methods of popular and free government which almost all the world has imitated. England has often been called the mother of parliaments, and like other mothers, she has taught her own language to her children.

There are two other words of English origin, *club* and *freemason*, which though not strictly political terms, have yet acquired a political significance, and have been added to many foreign languages. The word *club* has changed its meaning in modern times ; it was borrowed, however, in the eighteenth century with the signification, given it by Dr. Johnson, of "an assembly of good fellows meeting under certain conditions," and these assemblies soon acquired a political character, both in England and abroad. Somewhat similar in its origin and in its development abroad was freemasonry, another institution developed on English soil and transplanted with its name to the Continent at a somewhat earlier date.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The word *freemason* was borrowed and naturalized in Italian as *frammassone* ; in French and German it was translated into *franc maçon*, *Freimaurer*. The origin of the English word is obscure, and various explanations have been suggested. The masons were called "free," either because they worked in free-stone, or because they were of a superior class, or because they were "free" of the masons' guild ; or perhaps, as the *Oxford Dictionary* suggests, because, travelling about as they did from one place to another, they claimed exemption from the control of the local guilds in the towns where they were temporarily settled. The word lodge, *loge*, *loggia*, etc., already existed in the Latin languages, but acquired a new and special meaning from its use in English freemasonry. It is in origin a Teutonic word, and its original meaning was apparently that of a "shelter of foliage," a "summer-house," and it is connected with our English word "leaf." Borrowed from Germany into France, and thence into England, it returned again to the Continent with a new meaning.

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In the same way that in the eighteenth century the Continent borrowed clubs and masonic lodges, so, in the last century labour organizations have been imitated, and their terms borrowed abroad. *Trade-union* is found in French and Italian, the word *lock-out* has been borrowed or translated in many foreign languages, *strike* has been naturalized in German and Swedish, and the English co-operative movement has given a new meaning to *co-operation*, and the adjective *co-operative*.

### II

After politics, social organisation and labour, the other department of the European vocabulary in which the English element predominates is that of sport. The word *sport* itself though French in origin (it is a shortened form of *disport*), has acquired its special meaning in England, and, with *sportsman*, has made its way everywhere. With it we find practically the whole vocabulary of our racing terms; *jockey*, *Derby*, *turf*, *handicap*, *steeple-chase*, and many others, with other sporting terms, *record*, *match*, *box*; and more recently the vocabularies of football, tennis and golf have been almost universally borrowed.

Foreign railway terms also are largely of English origin, and the words *rail*, *express*, *tender*, *tunnel*, *trolley*, *wagon*, have been taken from our language. *Tramway* also (meaning abroad a tram-car) and *macadam* and *macadamize* are to be found in most continental languages. In the nautical vocabularies of foreign countries the English element is, as we have already



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seen, large and is rapidly increasing. In trade and finance besides the words *guinea* and *shilling*, we find that the important terms, *export*, *import*, *exportation*, *importation*, *free trade*, *warrant*, *cheque*, *consols*, *stock*, *jobber*, have been largely borrowed, and with them the manufactured words *celluloid*, *linoleum*, *tabloid*, and *kodak*.

English journalism has contributed the important words *reporter* and *leader*; *essay*, though borrowed from Montaigne, was popularized abroad by Macaulay's *Essays*, and the European vocabulary of literary criticism contains a number of important words, of which we must speak later in more detail. In philosophy and science, in addition to the adjectives *Baconien*, *Lockiste*, *Newtonien*, *Darwinien*, are to be found many terms of great importance taken from these and other English thinkers, to which also a more detailed consideration must be given. The importance of most of these borrowed words is in curious contrast with the English contributions in many other departments of human activity. Our language, with the exception of *Deist*,<sup>1</sup> *Pantheist*, *Puritan*, *Quaker*, *Presbyterian*, and the recent *Salvation Army*, has added little to the vocabulary of religious faith; <sup>2</sup> save for *mess*, which is perhaps of

<sup>1</sup> The word *Deism* is first found in French and was used by Pascal, and *Deist* is even older. But the words returned to the Continent in the eighteenth century with the special meaning given them by the English Deists. *Pantheist* was formed by the English Deist Toland in 1705. Toland did not use the word *Pantheism*, which was apparently formed from *Pantheist* in France. (O.E.D.)

<sup>2</sup> *Free Thought*, however, has been borrowed, and M. Barbier believes that, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the controversial terms, *Jésuitique*, *Jésuitisme*,

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naautical origin, it had, until the late war, given Europe no military terms. But in matters connected with the fine arts and music the poverty of our contributions is, perhaps, most remarkable. We share, with the rest of Europe, an international set of artistic terms, a vocabulary of music, painting, sculpture, architecture, first formed by the Italians of the Renaissance, and since then enriched by French, German and more modern Italian words ; but to this our language has made no additions of any importance. *Pre-Raphaelite* as the description of an English School, and the modern *aesthete*, are so far our only artistic exports ; and Benjamin Franklin's *harmonica* the only contribution of our race to the world's vocabulary of music.

This collection of terms certainly presents us a kind of mirror in which we see the character of our race reflected. But there are other classes of borrowed words which add significant details to that picture. When Sterne in his *Sentimental Journey* commented on a phrase used by his French barber, he truly remarked, " I think I can see the precise and distinguishing marks of national characters more in these nonsensical *minutiae*, than in the most important matters of state " ; and the English character, as it is seen in English loan words, is perhaps the most clearly mirrored in terms descriptive of food and dress, and of social types and customs.

In the words *roast-beef*, *beef-steak*, *pudding*, *rum*, *ale*, *grog*, *gin*, *whiskey*, we see portrayed, in an almost comic *papistique*, *Catholicisme* and *anti-chrétien*, derived much of their meaning from English writings. He gives also *fanatique* and *fanatisme* as words of English origin. (*S.P.E. Tract No. VII.*, pp. 10-11.)

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manner the taste for strong drinks and solid foods of that John Bull whom Taine described as "nourished by meat and porter, and sustained by bodily exercise and boxing." If we compare the terms connected with food and drink which the French have borrowed from us, with the terms they have given us in return, *champagne*, *liqueur*, *omelette*, *soufflé*, *paté*, *potage*, and hundreds of others, the contrast in national tastes appears in a striking manner. We must content ourselves with the *plum pudding* as the highest achievement of our race in the culinary art.

The same contrast appears in the names of dress. Englishmen, it is true, have set some of the fashions in men's dress, as we see in the *riding-coat* (*redingote*), the *spencer*, the *carrick*, the *smoking*; but the greater number of terms connected with costume which have been borrowed from us are of a plain and practical character. France has acquired from England the *mackintosh*, the *macfarlane*, the *waterproof*, the *plaid*, and the useful *flannel*, and is now assimilating *ulsters*, *sweaters*, *snow-boots* and *knicker-bockers*; while we at the same time have imported, and still import from France, our whole vocabulary of fashionable dress.

But there is even more direct evidence to be found about the point we are considering. Each of the more important countries of Europe has produced certain strongly marked types of character, and provided also from its own language the names or labels they bear in the international portrait gallery. From Spain has come the *hidalgo*, and with him the *don*, the *duenna*, the *Don Quixote*; the *dilettante*, the *cicerone*, the *charlatan*, the *lazzellone*, the *improvisatore* are children

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of the Italian climate; the *Philistine*, the *Junker*, the *Superman* come, with the mild *Backfisch*, from Germany; while France has provided the world with rich and varied portraits, the *amateur*, the *bon vivant*, the *bel esprit*, the *flâneur*, the *femme du monde*, the *demi-mondaine*, the *esprit fort*, the *intellectuel*, and many others. In the same way the Englishman, who made, early in history, a remarkable appearance on Continental soil as a *Goddam*, or *Godon*, has since that period been differentiated by foreign observers into various types—the *milord*, the *gentleman*, the *sportsman*, the *groom*, the *jockey*, the *tourist*, the *dandy*, the *fashionable*, and the *snob*. All these, their female companions the *miss*, the *spinster*, and the *blue stocking*, have been noted and named abroad. Some of these type-names give evidence of the impression made on foreigners by the travelling Englishmen of rank and their ideal of aristocratic life and manners. Our word *gentleman*, is, in its foreign use, descriptive of an ideal of what we call “good form,” and it is perhaps partly due to the prestige abroad of this ideal, and of English ways of life in general, that English sports have been so widely imitated, and their vocabularies borrowed. Another group of not unrelated words—*high-life*, *fashion*, *blackball*, and the more recent borrowings, *smart*, *select*, *snob*, point to the conclusion that social exclusiveness and social ambition—*le snobbisme* in fact—must be regarded as peculiarly predominant in English social life. Other English characteristics expressed by the terms *spleen*, *humour*, *eccentricity* will be considered later; *home*, *comfort* and *comfortable* are three very English words, which, describing as they do a very characteristic side

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of English life, have been widely borrowed ; and not unallied to these is the famous *pudeur anglaise*, the desire for outward decorum, which, to foreign observers, seems not devoid of an element of hypocrisy. The French have borrowed from our language the word *cant* to describe this characteristic—England is called *le pays du cant*, and the adjective *shocking* ! is considered, all over the Continent, to be one of the most frequent of English exclamations. *Puritan* is also used in this connection, and we have added the word *humbug* to the German vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> The word *respectability* has also been borrowed, and from its English use a new meaning has accrued to the French adjective, *respectable*. “To be at once respectable and comfortable ; these two words embrace all the mainsprings of English actions,” Taine remarked, using *respectable* in its English sense of presenting a decent appearance to the world. This special use of “respectable” to describe dress or other marks of social position, has been more than once remarked upon by foreign critics, one of them for instance, finding something odd in a sentence which he read in an English paper, to the effect that “a young woman of respectable appearance had been found dead-drunk in the gutter.”

### III

Such then is the Englishman, with his active life as a politician and a sportsman, his home, his comfort, his strong drinks and solid foods, as he has impressed

<sup>1</sup> To this list of ethical terms should be added the following French words, which M. Barbier (*loc. cit.*) traces to English sources, *indélicat*, *moraliste*, *immoral*, *immoralité*.

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himself upon the continent of Europe. He has himself provided from his own language words to describe his ideals and habits and *idiosyncrasies*, and the national type they portray is one of the most vivid and consistent that can anywhere be found. How absurdly British, how like a company of British tourists seen abroad, all these words are—*beef-steak*, *waterproof*, *comfort*, *sport*, and how aggressively the national character sticks out from each ! It is a type of character, an active and hardy way of life, which are imposing themselves, more and more, with their standards and customs, upon the world ; and the language which so vividly expresses them, is becoming more and more a universal language for all educated people. And not only are more and more foreigners learning to talk English, but they are naturalizing English words in their native tongues in ever increasing numbers.

And yet it is curious to note that this immense expansion of the English language, and this borrowing of English words abroad, is a comparatively recent phenomenon in history. For many centuries we imported words from the Continent in vast quantities ; Englishmen spoke French and studied Italian and borrowed the ideals and imitated the customs of these countries, but they gave practically nothing in return. Their speech was almost unknown to foreigners, nor did it occur to Frenchmen or Italians that there was anything of value to be derived from this country. Even as late as the reign of Charles II., there was, as Macaulay puts it in his picturesque way, a great gulf between the public mind of England and that of France. " Our institutions and our factions were as little under-

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stood at Paris as at Constantinople. It may be doubted whether any one of the forty members of the French Academy had an English volume in his library, or knew Shakespeare, Jonson, or Spenser, even by name.”<sup>1</sup>

England was for many centuries regarded by most of the cultivated inhabitants of the Continent as a remote island enveloped in mist, and inhabited by men as fierce and savage as the famous English mastiffs. To the great vocabulary of European civilization, the set of terms descriptive of doctrines, ideas, ways of feeling, institutions, artistic products and processes, which was first Italian and then French in origin, and to which Spain also contributed, our country made no additions before a comparatively late date towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> If at this period all the contributions of England to Continental culture had been wiped out, the world would have been aware of no appreciable loss.

As the point is one of some historical importance, it may be worth while to say a few words about it. During the Middle Ages it is true a few English words connected with trade and with the sea found their way into the French language, and in the sixteenth and the greater part of the seventeenth century the terms that were borrowed are of the same unimportant kind.

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, vol. i, chapter ii.

<sup>2</sup> A mention should, however, be made of the words transported to Norway in the tenth century, by the early missionaries who went to convert that country. But these ecclesiastical terms, like *abbot*, *church*, *cross*, *deacon*, *font*, *priest*, etc., which were borrowed into the Scandinavian languages, belonged to the universal language of the Church, and were merely handed on by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors to their heathen neighbours, and cannot be regarded as products of English life.

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The only English word borrowed in the sixteenth century which has become a general European term is *dog*. This word, found at first in the phrase *English dog*, made its way abroad to describe a powerful breed of English dogs then famous on the Continent.

Towards the end of the seventeenth and in the first half of the eighteenth century, however, a remarkable change took place. Foreign nations began to borrow English words in ever increasing numbers, not merely terms of trade and shipping, but words of a much more important kind. This linguistic fact corresponds very accurately in date with that great historical event which has been called "the discovery of England." First by means of Protestant refugees from France and then, mainly through the writings of Voltaire and Montesquieu, a whole new world was discovered, a civilization, a language, a literature, a science, a philosophy, a system of government, hitherto unknown. England was now seen looming in the West—a great and prosperous country, towards which all eyes were turned. But the history of this discovery has been written elsewhere; <sup>1</sup> we are only concerned with its linguistic aspect. The appearance in French writings of the words *Alderman*, *Puritan*, *committee*, *bill*, before the end of the seventeenth century, shows the growth of this knowledge of England; and now, with *bowling-green* (*boulingrin*), *ale*, *rum* and *punch*, we find the earliest of those sporting and alcoholic terms which were destined to be borrowed in such surprising numbers. And with these we find one word of prime importance, perhaps the greatest and most

<sup>1</sup> Above all, and in a most masterly fashion, by Joseph Texte, in his *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire* (1895).



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characteristic word which English has contributed to human thought. This is the word *experimental*, of which the meaning, used as it was of Bacon's "experimental philosophy," reached France with the knowledge of this philosophy before the beginning of the eighteenth century.

But it was in the eighteenth century, and especially in the years following Voltaire's visit, that the real invasion began. The *lord*, the *baronet*, the *gentleman*, the *coroner*, the *Quaker*, the *Presbyterian*, became known to Frenchmen. Freemasonry spread abroad, and clubs were formed where men of common education, whatever their condition of life, could meet together and converse on equal terms. English political institutions became objects of study and admiration; words like *jury*, *budget*, *excise*, were borrowed, and the old terms, *vote*, *constitution*, *Parlement*, acquired new and English meanings. The influence of English liberal thought in religious matters, English "natural religion," popularized as it was in France by Voltaire, and by translations from the English Deists, and by Pope's *Essay on Man*, shows itself in the words *Free Thought*, *Deist*, and *Deism*, which now became current, in the borrowed term *Pantheist*, and may also be found in the formation of the French word *tolérance*, which is apparently of later date than the English *toleration*. The advance in scientific thought which we associate with Bacon and Boyle and Newton, "English philosophy" as it was called, *il saper britannico*, also aroused great enthusiasm in France and Germany and Italy. The great word *experimental* was followed by Locke's *Association of Ideas*; by Newton's learned formations,

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*centrifugal*, *centripetal*, *refrangibility*; by the new meanings he gave to *fluxions*, to *inertia*, and by his new and most important application of the word *attraction*—the word which, as Voltaire said, caused such dismay in France, where the adherents of the new theory were labelled *attractionnaires* or *attractionnistes*. There is perhaps nothing in linguistic history more striking than the contrast between the great English words which reached the Continent at this period, and the humble trade terms, the names of boats and fishes, which had been borrowed in the previous centuries.

About 1750 we find the very curious word *Anglo-mania* appearing, a word which would have been meaningless in the previous century, but which now became current and popular. This Continental *Anglo-mania*, this enthusiasm for English ways, which began in France, and spread from France to the rest of Europe, was in some ways reasonable enough, but there entered into it also a certain unreal and fantastic element. The French nation, exhausted by the wars and the dismal years in which the great reign of Louis XIV. ended, and subject still to political and religious despotism, saw in England a striking contrast to its own sorry condition—a prosperous country, in which the principles of religious toleration and constitutional government had been established, and in which also a new philosophy, a new science, and a new literature had come into existence.

But the real facts of the case were curiously distorted. Voltaire and other French *Anglomaniacs* had little of the very modern desire to get at the truth, to portray life and institutions as they really are. Their object

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was in the main polemical, and their praise of English freedom and English toleration was really an attack on the State and Church in France. Reformers often try to find in foreign countries their ideal of what they wish for at home ; the enthusiasm in Athens for an ideal Sparta, the admiration of Tacitus for the ancient Germans, are familiar instances of this tendency of all peoples to build political castles in the air of countries beyond their own borders. This polemical intention is reinforced also by the tendency, natural to the human mind, to find something wonderful and admirable in whatever is strange and foreign. Nations look at each other from afar through curious glasses, glasses which sometimes distort and caricature, but which often tinge the objects seen through them with prismatic colours. England has in the course of modern history incurred much political hatred, but English life and English customs have shone, and still shine, with a certain glory. Words in consequence borrowed from our language have acquired abroad a glamour and a prestige which they by no means possess at home. It is difficult for us quite to appreciate the full effects of this curious sea-change, the way in which our clowns and grooms and jockeys take on, in crossing the Channel, a new distinction, and our homely puddings and beef-steaks are transformed into something rich and strange by the same process.

### IV

When Gibbon visited Paris in 1763, he found, as he tells in his *Autobiography*, that English opinions, fashions,

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and even English games were being adopted by the French ; " a ray of national glory," he says, " illuminated each individual, and every Englishman was supposed to be born a patriot and a philosopher." England was then regarded as the Utopia, the moral El Dorado, the Fortunate Island of the time ; it was under English skies that Frenchmen imagined ideal dwelling places, cities of philosophers, free and wise and happy. There is something remote, exotic, and almost Chinese about this ideal England of the eighteenth century ; it has the quaintness of those scenes we see depicted on Chinese porcelain or fans or lacquer cabinets. And indeed the analogy with China is not altogether fantastic, for China was " discovered " at the same time, and described in much the same fashion. China, too, was a land of virtue and happiness and religious freedom, whose philosophers were endowed with the sublimest wisdom, and whose laws, police, arts, and industry were held up as models to the European world. Voltaire was the popular discoverer and the panegyrist of both these realms ; from both of them he drew his arguments and examples, finding English Quakers or Chinese Mandarins equally useful as pawns in his attack on the Church and the State in France.

Bearing in mind then this Continental Anglomania, with its curious effects of distortion and idealization, let us look at the eighteenth-century Englishman as mirrored in foreign eyes. We see him in French fashion-plates and old illustrations, with his long riding-coat, his yellow waistcoat, his uncovered head, his cropped and unpowdered hair. The distinction of his

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bad manners, his haughty ways, his rigid adherence to his own customs, makes a strong impression as he travels about the Continent ; and from his own language the meaning of *eccentricity* is borrowed to describe his individuality and independent bearing. But in the main he was studied in English books ; the eighteenth-century Englishman is essentially a literary character ; and to describe this character it was necessary to use words borrowed from these books. The immense influence which was exerted on the Continent in the eighteenth century by the writings of Addison, Swift, Defoe, Pope, Richardson, Young, and other authors, has been described by all literary historians of that period ; we are only concerned with the deposits which it has left in foreign languages. Among these we find certain stray words, Swift's *Lilliputian*, Richardson's *Lovelace*, a name (now obsolete) for a seducer ; and *Robinson*, which lingers on as a villa-name in France, and which, in the form of *Robinsonade*, became a general term in Germany for stories of adventure. In addition to these there is a group of words of much greater importance. One of the best known of these is the familiar word *spleen*, which became the popular name for a morbid and hypochondriacal state of melancholia, regarded, both at home and abroad, as a specially English malady. Voltaire popularized the word in France, and in one of the latest of important French dictionaries it is defined as *ennui de toutes choses, maladie hypochondriaque propre aux Anglais*. With the growing knowledge of England, English spleen, English melancholy, became famous all over Europe, and the word spread from French into the other languages of the

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Continent. Englishmen were universally believed to be in the habit of committing suicide, merely from disgust with life ; and this view prevailed even in England itself, as we see from the lines in Young's famous *Night Thoughts* :

“ O Britain, infamous for Suicide! . . .  
In ambient Waves plunge thy polluted Head,  
Wash the dire Stain, nor shock the Continent.”<sup>1</sup>

Foreigners were certainly right in finding a deeply melancholy strain in English literature, especially in the “graveyard” poets, Young, Blair, and Gray, who were at this time so popular abroad. Goethe, not without reason, described English poets as accomplished misanthropes, although we can hardly accept as adequate his description of the main themes of English “tender” poetry : “Here a deserted girl is dying ; there a faithful lover is drowned, or devoured by a shark before he can swim into the presence of his beloved.”

Another English term borrowed apparently later than spleen is the famous word *humour*. That foreigners possessed no term for humour has become a commonplace of criticism. It was however pointed out by Voltaire that the French word *humeur*, which now means “bad humour,” had been formerly employed to describe the perception or expression of the odd and incongruous. But this meaning became obsolete ; and when in English writings, and especially in those of Sterne, foreigners became acquainted with this characteristic, but by no means exclusively English quality, they were forced to borrow the word to describe it, and we find *humour* in French side by side with

<sup>1</sup> *Night Thoughts*, book v.

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*humeur*. The word with its derivative *humorist*, is equally at home in German and Italian and other Continental languages.

If Sterne's writings helped foreigners to understand English humour, he was even more directly responsible for adding to the currency of Europe the word *sentimental*, which had just been issued, new and shining from the English mint. First found as "a perfumed term of the time," in 1749, it was carried abroad in 1768 by Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. The word was borrowed into French and Italian, and also into German, in which language however it was for the most part replaced by *empfindsam*, a new formation which, on Lessing's advice, was adopted in the title of the German translation of the *Sentimental Journey*.

Writers who have borrowed Sterne's title in more recent times, have done so with conscious irony; but Sterne seems to have had no ironic intention in his use of this once enchanting word. *Sentimental* for him and his contemporaries had a meaning and expressed a way of feeling which has fallen with us now into such discredit, that we cannot recall its magic, or find indeed any unspoilt term to express it. It sums up and expresses all the various aspects of eighteenth century "sensibility"; the new emotions, the new ways of feeling, which, embodied in English literature and especially in Richardson and Sterne, gave new sentiments to tender souls all over the Continent, unlocked for them new sources of tears, and taught them to weep where they had never wept before. It meant a delicate sensibility, denied to coarse and callous natures, a power of being touched by genuine and

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simple things, a sense of our common humanity, and of the pathos and beauty of life, even in its humblest aspects, in the poverty of beggars and outcasts, in the love of the poor peasant for his dead donkey, the unhappiness of the caged starling. If it also meant an indulgence in insincere feeling, in the luxury of tears, and the enjoyment of one's own emotions, this was hardly apparent at the time : the word shone like pure gold, although it has for us at least long since lost its lustre.

The history abroad of the even more important English word *romantic* will be found in another chapter, where also will be found an account of the English contributions embodied in other romantic terms of criticism, to the Romantic movements in Germany and France. But many years before these movements were given an adequate expression in literature (for the poetry of the eighteenth-century romanticists was still "classical" in style and diction), their characteristic tendencies and ways of feeling were somewhat fantastically embodied in other materials. Travellers in France and Germany or Italy, visiting old palaces and villas, will often have pointed out to them a *Jardin Anglais*, and *Englischer Garten*, a *Giardino Inglese* ; and if they enter these melancholy precincts they will find themselves in spaces of woodland or shrubbery, irregularly laid out with winding paths, and adorned perhaps with decayed temples and hermitages—bits of landscape, which though called "English gardens," are hardly gardens at all as the word is now used in England. These are but the relics and remnants left by a fashion in taste which spread from England to the Continent in the eighteenth century—a fashion



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which grew directly out of the ways of feeling embodied in the English words *sentimental* and *romantic*. The English garden was romantic, not only because it provided with its caves and grottoes the romantic thrill, *le frisson romantique*, but because it was a return to wild and uncultivated nature. But like Romanticism it was an artistic and self-conscious return, for the origin of this "Landscape gardening," as it was called, was largely due to a desire to realize in nature the descriptions of poets, or to copy the landscapes of Claude Lorraine or Poussin or Salvator Rosa. We find also in the English gardens of this period both at home, or on the Continent, all the decorative elements with which the Romantic poets afterwards adorned their poems—crag and waterfalls, and blasted trees, Gothic ruins, and "timestruck" abbeys, medieval castles, caves of Merlin, Druid circles, and tombs of imaginary suicides. Nor was the element of romantic exoticism wanting; the first suggestion of wild gardens came from the reports of travellers in China; taste for them was often called in France *le goût Anglo-Chinois*, and they were adorned with Chinese pavilions side by side with obelisks, mosques and Hindu temples. But these gardens were, above all, *sentimental* in the old meaning of the word; they were laid out, as Werther wrote, by a "feeling heart"; they were designed as haunts for solitude and melancholy reverie. Modern horticulturists will agree with Horace Walpole's remark that it is "almost comic to set aside a quarter of one's garden to be melancholy in"; but the amateur of historical sensations who wishes to enjoy the exquisite melancholy of the eighteenth century, and would weep

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once more with Werther and Rousseau (if indeed such tears be possible) can most successfully revive this obsolete emotion in the sombre and lonely paths of the half-abandoned "English gardens" of the Continent.

### V

In our study of English influences on the Continent and on continental speech, we have more or less confined ourselves to France and the French language. But France was at this time the centre of civilization and culture; Paris was the artistic and intellectual capital of Europe; French had become the universal language, and thoughts expressed in that tongue, and words borrowed into it, soon made their way into the minds and speech of the rest of Europe. We find the Italians faithfully following the French fashion of Anglomania, borrowing the same words and imitating the same sentiments.<sup>1</sup> If the England discovered by the French in the eighteenth century was a somewhat unreal and Utopian country, it did not lose that character when seen and imitated from beyond the Alps. Indeed it became, if anything, more fantastic; it was a country twice removed, shining through two sets of prismatic glasses; the English costumes grew, perhaps, more exaggerated, the English gardens still more grotesque, and the English *milords*, who began to appear on the Italian stage, Mylord Runebif, Lord Stunkle, Lord Wilk, were even more spleenful and eccentric than their French relations.

<sup>1</sup>See A. Graf, *L'Anglomania e l'influsso inglese in Italia ne secolo xviii.* (Torino, 1911).

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To Germany also the knowledge of England came at first from France, and many of the English words which the Germans borrowed were pronounced at first in the French fashion. But the Germans soon discovered another England for themselves—a much more profound and Teutonic England than Voltaire's *Anglo-Chinois* discovery. And to them also, as to the French, England stood for freedom—not political freedom indeed, for German political ideals had hardly advanced beyond the conception of enlightened despotism—but the freedom of the artist. For in Germany a new and national literature was rapidly springing up, a literature that owed its origin to English influences and looked to England for its models. Not only were the writings of Addison, Defoe, Pope, Richardson, and Sterne, admired and translated even more in Germany than in France, but their influence was more thoroughly assimilated. And greater spirits than these, and mightier influences, Milton and Shakespere, and above all Shakespere, came to be studied and understood in a way that was impossible in France. Voltaire it is true had ventured to give a modified praise to Shakespere, and made him, with the Quakers, as M. Jusserand says, one of the curiosities of Europe; but neither Voltaire nor his countrymen really understood his greatness. But to Germany Shakespere came like a revelation, the revelation of a hitherto unknown world of power and passion; it was, as Goethe wrote, like the miraculous gift of sight to one born blind, and they were intoxicated and dazzled by the sudden light.

The Germans also, like the French, made use of their new discovery for a propagandist purpose—not

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indeed to attack domestic institutions, but to free the genius of their country from the alien French domination by which it had been so long fettered. It is not, however, my task to describe the discovery of Shakespeare in Germany, the rising like the sun of this great luminary in the Teutonic heavens; we are only concerned with the traces it has left in the German language. *Blank verse* (*Blankvers*) is one of these, and in addition to the Shakespearian words *elf* and *bombast*, many tags from the plays and especially from Hamlet, "To be, or not to be," "The time is out of joint," "words, words, words," "The rest is silence," have become incorporated as familiar quotations in the German language, and remain as memorials of the immense enthusiasm of the time for that tragedy, when all the stages of Germany echoed with Hamlet's monologues, and every young German, as Goethe tells us, knew them by heart and fancied "he had a right to be as melancholy as the Prince of Denmark, although he had seen no ghost, and had no royal father to avenge."

There remains one other word which, owing to the beginnings of romanticism in England, acquired a new meaning abroad in the eighteenth century. This is the word *ballad*, which, from meaning a popular song of almost any kind, gradually began in England, like the words *Gothic* and *Romantic*, to rise in estimation, and acquired its present meaning—that of a poem of popular origin and character in which some story or legend is related.<sup>1</sup> This new meaning of the word

<sup>1</sup> *Ballade* meant originally in French a dancing song, and has come to designate a special form of metrical composition. The word has also acquired in French the English meaning mentioned above.

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was introduced into Germany by Percy's collection of *Old Heroical Ballads*, in 1765. Percy's *Reliques* aroused the greatest enthusiasm in Germany, and the study and imitation of popular songs which followed its publication resulted in that flowering of lyric verse which is now regarded as the golden age of German poetry. And again this foreign enthusiasm returned to England; Scott and others began, before the end of the eighteenth century, translating the German ballads which were themselves modelled on English originals, and the word *ballad* itself came home, invested with a new dignity and importance.

We have now examined the main deposit of English words and English meanings left in French and German by influences from this country during the eighteenth century. In the other languages of Europe, in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, in Danish, Dutch, Swedish, and Russian, the English deposit is very much the same; there are certain variations it is true, but on the whole these countries have followed the examples of Germany and France in their appropriation of English terms. Our nineteenth-century contributions to this general European vocabulary are more numerous indeed, but they have not the same historical and literary importance, and they may be dismissed more briefly. With the growth of sport abroad, the spread of parliamentary institutions, English sporting and political terms have been adopted in great numbers; from the English vocabulary of social customs, the *five o'clock*, the *garden party*, the *water-closet*, and more recently the *week-end* have been borrowed; the English characters the *flirt*, the *pickpocket*, the *vegetarian*, the *boy-scout*, and (in

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Russia) the *hooligan* have become familiar : the word *self-help* has been widely borrowed, and the English detective stories, and especially those concerning Sherlock Holmes, have added the word *detective* to the European vocabulary. The immense enthusiasm on the Continent, first for Byron's poems and then for Dickens' novels, does not appear to have added anything new and distinctive to foreign vocabularies ; but the Scottish words *claymore*, *plaid*, and *tartan*, owe perhaps their partial or complete adoption into French to the great popularity of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

To the vocabulary of the arts we have added little beyond a few terms connected with the Circus and the Music Hall—*clown*, and *Music Hall* itself, and *star* and *attractions*. To the vocabulary of thought our most important contributions have been the word *utilitarian*, made popular by Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and the Darwinian watchwords, *Darwinism*, *natural selection*, *struggle for existence*, and *reversion*. The terms connected with railways, trade-unions and newspapers, which were borrowed in this country, have been already mentioned. In addition to these, the American branch of the Anglo-Saxon race has begun to export to Europe its special products. Already in the eighteenth century the American Declaration of Independence gave currency and fame to the phrase *Rights of Man* (*droits de l'homme*, *Menschenrechte*, etc.) ; in the name of the *Convention Nationale*, which established the French Republic, the special use of *Convention* seems to have been derived from the American "Convention" of 1787, which in its turn was named from the English "Convention Parliament"

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of 1688; and the great revolutionary watchword *Ça ira* is said to owe its origin to Benjamin Franklin, the words being his cheerful reply, during the American War, to a query about the new Republic's chances of success in that struggle.<sup>1</sup> More recently, Europe had borrowed the *platform*, the *caucus*, the *interview*, and *lynch* and the *Yellow Press*, from the American Continent, and with these *table-turning*, *faith-healing*, *co-education*, and the modern *cake-walk*; and since the war President Wilson has added the great explosive watchword *self-determination*, to the vocabulary of the world.

### VI

Races and nations are ultimately judged in the court of history by their contributions to the life and thought of man—by what they have added to the common fund of civilization. What the final verdict of history will be on the English nation and on the Anglo-Saxon race, it is not for us to anticipate; but our linguistic test, our examination of what we have so far added to the language of civilization, enables us at least to form an opinion about the past achievements of our race. Plainly we can claim no originality in the plastic arts or music; to literature on the other hand the English contributions have been of greatest value. Leaving aside the splendid accident (if it be an accident) of Shakespeare's genius, we find the literature of France

<sup>1</sup> M. Barbier traces to the influence of the American War of Independence the adoption of the words *congrès* and *fédéral*. He gives as earlier borrowings from America *scalper*, *tatouer*, *squaw* and *wigwam* (S.P.E. Tract VII., pp. 10, 27).

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and Germany drawing new life in the eighteenth century from England, and almost indeed re-created by the influence of English novels, poems, plays, and ballads. But what, after all, gave these works their great and renovating power was the new ways of thought and feeling they embodied and expressed. These are of two different kinds—on the one hand we find Continental writers learning from English essays, novels and domestic tragedies, a certain sense of actual fact, of realism, and human character and humour; and also imbibing from English writings sentiment and melancholy and romanticism—a romantic love of the past, and an equally romantic love of wild nature. Of these, however, the realism and humour may perhaps be regarded as most essentially English; for the sentiment and melancholy and romanticism are rather Teutonic in character; they belong to all the German races; they are more at home in Germany than England, and they were only regarded as English in the eighteenth century, because the English were the first Teutonic people who expressed them in literature of world-wide importance—the first to play an important part in that great stage of civilization which had been hitherto almost monopolized by the Latin races.

There is one thing, however, characteristically English about them—the unconscious and almost casual way in which they arose. They were movements of thought and feeling, which, unlike similar movements abroad, were unorganized, uncritical, undogmatic; they seem rather spontaneous growths, arising sporadically, and by chance, on the rich soil of England, and only flowering into doctrine and theory after their trans-



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plantation to foreign countries. The most striking instance of this is to be found in the early history of the Romantic Movement, which, as will be seen in the next chapter, started in an almost casual and unpremeditated way in England, and only acquired a conscious purpose and a spirit of propaganda after its transplantation in foreign countries. In the same way English sentiment and English Deism were transformed into new social and religious solvents abroad ; and even the theory of the British Constitution was first most fully developed and explained to Englishmen themselves by French political philosophers.

In modern theories and ideals there are to be found indeed many elements of English origin, but these are provided in the form of raw material ; and just as this country in the Middle Ages sent abroad wool for medieval weavers, and re-imported the finished product, so it has in more recent times provided foreign philosophers with much of the material for their webs, receiving it back again in the form of scheme and theory. English adjectives like *romantic* and *constitutional* travel abroad, and, after their sojourn among foreign theorists, return home changed into abstract nouns—*Romanticism*, *Constitutionality*, charged with doctrine and propagandist purpose.

It is perhaps not fanciful to find the same positive spirit, the same inaptitude and dislike for abstract theory, even in the great contributions which our race has made to human thought. For these—Bacon's experimental philosophy, Locke's psychology, Newton's law of gravitation, and Darwin's theory of evolution, are not so much new conceptions of the nature of

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the universe, as definite explanations and practical workings out of hypotheses derived from other sources.

This same characteristic is even more marked in the region of social theory. It is from France, *le berceau de toutes les utopies*, that Europe has received its great social ideals; the working out of these ideals and their embodiment in practical institutions has been the special part played by this country. Watchwords like *liberty*, *equality*, *fraternity*, come to us from France; while France borrows in return the vocabularies of self-government and the organization of labour. The *ideologue* and *doctrinaire* are Frenchmen characters, but the *Utilitarian* is an Englishman.

The one great exception, one important word in the vocabulary of European idealism of English origin is the word *Utopia*. But this exception is one which tests and, as we say, proves the rule. For *Utopia* was not a product of the English language, it was merely a fanciful coinage made from Greek elements by a learned Englishman, Sir Thomas More; it was first printed in a Latin book abroad, and was adopted into French before it became an English word.

If then our linguistic test has any value, we must conclude that the English are essentially a practical race. The conscious desire for ideal and perfect things has not inspired them, nor have they provided humanity with its religions, its dreams and remote aspirations. What they have contributed—and they have contributed much—has been done instinctively, by temporary solutions to difficulties as they arose, by unconscious adjustments to new circumstances. They have provided new material for theory, and the “stuff that

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dreams are made on," and they have also done much to bring theories and dreams down to the concrete earth, to embody ideals in institutions, to base abstract theories upon experiment and fact.

So far our linguistic conclusions are in agreement with the observations of Continental observers, who regard the English, not as theorists or dreamers, but as the most practical race of Europe, the Romans of the modern world. But there is one other conclusion our study enforces on us which is perhaps more novel. When we examine the English words in foreign languages, we find that the most numerous and the most important of them belong to a special class, and have in common one marked characteristic. They are all descriptions of some kind of associative action ; they are names for methods and results of one form or other of voluntary co-operation, and owe their origin to the formation of groups or bodies, large or small, of men working freely together for some common purpose. This class of terms includes not only the vocabulary of party politics, freemasonry and clubs, of various social and labour organizations, but also the whole vocabulary of English sport. For those sports which, like motor-ing, depend upon individual invention and initiative, are of foreign origin, and their terms are foreign, but those which require organized action—racing associations, or crews, or teams—with their various bodies of unwritten law, come from England.

When England was discovered in the eighteenth century, it was above all on account of its freedom that it became famous. Continental observers found in it both the model of a free state, and the home of personal

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and individual liberty. In the free communities of antiquity the liberty of the individual had been sacrificed to that of the state ; but in England not only was the state free, but the Englishman was at liberty to live his own life in his own way, to indulge his eccentricities and humours, to enjoy his own religion, and to express in speech and print his own opinions.

This picture of England was no doubt exaggerated ; but in contrast to the condition of the Continent at that time, England was certainly, as Montesquieu described it, "the freest country in the world." But in addition to the freedom of the individual and that of the state, England was then, and has been through a long period of history, the home of a third kind of freedom, closely related to them—a kind which was widely imitated, although it did not attract the same conscious attention. This was the freedom of association, of forming voluntary groups endowed with a kind of personality and a self-developing life of their own. Among groups of this kind which have grown up, for the most part naturally and unconsciously on the English soil, may be mentioned medieval guilds, the Inns of Court, companies of soldiers in foreign service, merchant adventurers, jointstock companies, commercial colonies, clubs, freemasons' lodges, friendly and co-operative societies, dissenting sects, trade unions, and sporting associations in almost infinite variety. In one great word which has been adopted from English into almost all the languages of the world—in the word *Committee*, we find an embodiment of this English spirit of free association, and the method by which these self-governing groups manage their affairs.

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The origin and development of this special form of English freedom has been attributed to the fact that Roman Law, with its enmity to voluntary organizations, and its abstract and absolutist theory of the State, never supplanted the Common Law of the country. But to whatever accident of history, or special quality of race, England owes its free associations, and the special morality and type of character which makes them possible—the spirit of give and take, of “playing the game,” the voluntary submission of the individual to the group—it is in these qualities and characteristics (if there is any truth in our linguistic theory) that will be found the most original manifestations of the national genius ; and embodied as they are in the institutions of free government, the most important contribution which England has made to the civilization of the world.

## CHAPTER III

### FOUR ROMANTIC WORDS

#### I

I MENTIONED in the previous chapter, among the English words borrowed into foreign languages, one adjective, the word *romantic*, which has been added to all the vocabularies of Europe. This is a word of such prime importance that, to give an account of its origin, and its adventures, both in England and abroad, a separate study will be necessary. There is no word in our language which has a more "romantic" history; much in its signification, both as we employ it now and as we find it employed in our elder literature, is the result of what it has been through; and a knowledge of all this will be of assistance in enabling us to understand the various thoughts and ways of feeling which it has come to express, and which still deeply colour its meaning. But the emergence of the word *romantic* is not an isolated phenomenon; its history is closely connected with the history of several other terms of modern aesthetic criticism—terms which came into use at about the same time, and shared the same adventures. This cluster of romantic words is the product of one of the most important movements of modern thought, and the history of that movement is curiously mirrored in their usage. They are, both in

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formation and meaning, very largely of English origin ; from English they made their way into foreign languages ; and the new conceptions they express form one of the most notable of English contributions to European thought.

Of this cluster of new terms, or of old terms endowed with new meanings, the earliest to make its appearance is the adjective *romantic*, of which the first instance is given in the *Oxford Dictionary* under the date of 1659.<sup>1</sup> It is apparently a word of English origin,<sup>2</sup> formed from the English word *romant* or *romaunt*—a word which was borrowed in the sixteenth century from the French

<sup>1</sup> (See below, p. 75, note 2). The adjective is found in Evelyn's *Diary* under the date of 1654 (see below, p. 78, note 2). As, however, Evelyn edited, or re-wrote, his diary towards the end of his life, it cannot be relied upon as a safe indication of linguistic usage. The etymology of the word is well known ; " a whole chapter of literary history is included in the derivation of *Romantic* from Rome ; it tells of the rise of rude popular dialects, alongside the learned and polished Latin, in the various provinces of the Roman Empire ; and of the rise of modern European fiction, written so distinctively in these dialects that it got its name from them " : W. D. Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language* (1867), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> It was borrowed into French and German from English ; Grimm's *Wörterbuch*, however, quotes from a Latin MS. of the fifteenth century an instance of *romanticus* used as a term for a fictitious tale (article *Romantisch*). In the *Life* of Sir Philip Sidney, which was written by Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, probably before 1612, but which was not published until 1652, occurs the phrase, " Do not his Arcadian Romanties live after him ? " (p. 13). The word *Romanties* in this passage might perhaps be regarded (and so the Editor of the *Oxford Dictionary* seems to have regarded it) as a misprint for *Romantics*, but in a MS. version of the *Life* in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, the word is spelt *Romantiæ*. In the printed version however the impression of the *e* in *Romanties* is not a clear one, and might easily be mistaken for a *c* ; and it is not impossible that our word *romantic* owes its origin to a contemporary misreading of this kind. Fulke Greville's *Romanties* may be a variant of the Chaucerian word *Romaunte*.

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are what Dr. Bradley called "identifying" words<sup>1</sup>; sometimes, however, a new discovery is given a "descriptive" name like *gravitation*; or again, as with *oxygen*, an explanatory word may be formed which attempts more adequately to account for the new phenomenon. But comprehension is reached, if indeed it is ever reached, long after recognition; analytic and explanatory terms for half-understood phenomena often imply, like *oxygen* ("generator of acids"), a false explanation; the usual, and much the safest way, is to give a non-committal, designating, or at most a descriptive name to a new experience, which then, gradually, and in the course of time, can be more accurately defined and perhaps at last explained. In the even more elusive phenomena of aesthetic perceptions, this process of identification, denotation, and suggested explanation is still more tentative and slow; new aspects of thought and feeling come to be designated by names which are at first little more than the chance names of vague impressions—obscure perceptions of some quality for which a label of some kind would be convenient. This label then forms a centre of attraction for other vague perceptions which group themselves about it; and it is only by a long and tentative process of collective thought that the various aspects of the phenomena described become more apparent, and the label or name acquires more definite meanings. Our word *romantic* is a conspicuous instance of this process. Its appearance in the middle of the seventeenth century is an indication of a change in human thought, and marks the moment when that change had become

<sup>1</sup> S.P.E. *Tract* III., p. 19.



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*romaunt*, and which, used as a variant of *romance* in the seventeenth century, was revived as an archaism in the nineteenth. Before, however, *romantic* became a current term, a number of other attempts were made, as the *Oxford Dictionary* shows us, to form adjectives with the same meaning. In 1653 Dorothy Osborne writes of a *romance* squire, and in the following year of a *romance* story; in 1656 the Duchess of Newcastle speaks of her "*Romanticall Tales*"; and we also find the adjectives *romancial* (1653) and *romancy* (1654). The fact that all these adjectives crop up in the seven years between 1653 and 1659, and that *romantic* soon becomes a current term, is certainly curious. Why just at this time was there a need felt for this adjective which had never been felt before?

The emergence of a new term to describe a certain phenomenon, of a new adjective to designate a certain quality, is always of interest, both linguistically and from the point of view of the history of human thought. That history would be a much simpler matter (and language, too, a much more precise instrument) if new thoughts on their appearance, and new facts at their discovery, could at once be analysed and explained and named with scientific precision. But even in science this seldom happens; we find rather that a whole complex group of facts, like those for instance of gas or electricity, are at first somewhat vaguely noticed, and are given, more or less by chance, a name like that of *gas*, which is an arbitrary formation, or that of *electricity*, which is derived from the attractive power of *electrum* or amber when rubbed—the first electric phenomenon to be noticed. *Gas*, *electric*, and *electricity*

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obvious enough to need a term to express it. *Romantic*, like *romancy* and *romanzical*, simply meant "like the old romances," and shows that men at this time were becoming aware of certain qualities in these romances for which they needed a name—that they were becoming critical of them, and had begun to view them with a certain detachment. These romances were of two kinds : there were the medieval tales of chivalry and knight-errants, of "The Palmerins of England and the Amadis of Gaul" who, as Hazlitt describes them, "made their way to their mistresses' hearts by slaying giants and taming dragons" ; and there were also those prolix French romances of intrigue and gallantry, which succeeded the earlier tales. The special characteristic of all these romances, for which a name was now needed, was their falseness and unreality, all that was imaginary and impossible in them, all that was contrary to the more rational view of life which was beginning to dominate men's minds. The growth of this conception of "order" and "nature," this "dawn of reason," as an eighteenth-century writer called it, threw into relief certain groups of irrational elements which were opposed to it. The phenomena of religious fanaticism were branded as *enthusiasm*, and the fictions and imaginations of the old romances were labelled by the word *romantic*. The meaning of "false," "fictitious," "imaginary," implied by *romantic* was applied both to the supernatural elements in the medieval romances, their giants, magicians, and enchanted castles ; and also to the false, impossible, high-flown sentiments of the later romances ; those "wild romantic tales," as a seventeenth-century writer described them, "wherein

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to a word, the special nuance of feeling it expresses, can often be best seen by the company it keeps ; and in the writings of this period we find the word *romantic* coupled with terms like "chimerical," "ridiculous," "unnatural," "bombast" ; we read of "childish and romantic poems," of "romantic absurdities and incredible fictions" : "can anything," Bishop South asks, "be imagined more profane and impious, absurd and indeed romantic" ? and Psalmanazar confesses to the "vile and romantic" deception of his pretence to be a native of Formosa.

It was the need, therefore, to mark the contrast between the truth of nature and the falsehood of romance which first brought into use this famous adjective. It makes its appearance at the moment when as an eighteenth-century writer puts it, "reason was but dawning, as we may say, and just about to gain the ascendant over the portentous spectres of the imagination. Its growing splendour, in the end, put them all to flight."<sup>1</sup> Bishop Hurd is writing of what he calls the "romantic" literature of the Elizabethan age, which, according to him was haunted by these spectres : the growing splendour which banished them was that of the Age of Reason, the *Éclaircissement*, the *Aufklärung*—that conception of order and truth, of the whole universe governed by law, which rose in the latter half of the seventeenth century like a sunrise of reason over the spectre-haunted Europe, with its romantic literature, its superstitions, its fanaticisms, and its religious wars.

<sup>1</sup> Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762. (Ed. 1911, p. 153.)

## FOUR ROMANTIC WORDS

they strain love and honour to that ridiculous height that it becomes burlesque.”<sup>1</sup>

Both these elements, the supernatural and what we now call the sentimental, were falling into disrepute at the time when the word *romantic* appeared to describe them. In 1650 Hobbes, in that famous answer to Davenant, which formed the basis of neo-classical criticism in England, protested against the use of the supernatural, against fiction that exceeded the possibility of “Nature,” “impenetrable armour, Incharmed Castles, invulnerable bodies, Iron Men, Flying horses”<sup>2</sup>; and his protest was echoed by the critics who followed after him; while Sir William Temple<sup>3</sup> pointed out how Cervantes had turned into ridicule “the Romantick Honour and Love”<sup>4</sup> of the romances of chivalry.

In the course of the next hundred and fifty years the word *romantic*, as a description of false and fictitious beings and feelings, without real existence in fact or in human nature, fell more and more into disrepute and disestimation. The particular shade of meaning given

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Shadwell, Preface to the *Sullen Lovers*, 1668. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, vol. ii, p. 150. (I shall refer in future to this collection as Spingarn.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *On Ancient and Modern Learning*, 1690, *ibid.* vol. iii. p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “romantic love,” which has acquired so rich a meaning in modern times, was used somewhat differently in the eighteenth century. A writer in *The World*, for instance (No. 79, July 4, 1754), mentions some ladies who had remained unmarried because their imaginations had been “early perverted with the Chimerical ideas of Romantic Love,” according to which passion, he adds, “a footman may as well be the hero as his master”; and he tells the story of Clarinda, who, instead of marrying the suitable Theodore, fell in love with his French valet Antoine, there being “no resisting of the impetuosity of romantic love.”

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Of all periods in the history of poetry perhaps the one which is most external to our sympathies, opaque and impenetrable to our imaginations, is precisely this period which lies so near us in the point of time, this Age of Reason, with its bewigged platitudes, its shallow criticism, and its intolerably didactic verse. How can the most practised amateur of historical emotions read Pope's *Essay on Man* with the enthusiasm which carried that sententious poem over Europe, or feel the disgust which was aroused, as Evelyn noted,<sup>1</sup> in that "refined age," by plays like *Hamlet*? To recapture that mood, to bathe again in the freshness of that dawn, is not permitted to us; but perhaps, in the architecture of the period, in the severe beauty of some classical church or mansion, with its ornaments adorning, like noble rhetoric, its perfect proportions and ordered forms, we can best realize the charm of the qualities of order and reason and correctness, which were then prized and sought for, not only in architecture, but in poetry as well.

The literary revolution of this period was well summed up by Thomas Warton, when he said that a poetry succeeded the elder poetry, in which "imagination gave way to correctness."<sup>2</sup> The connexion between poetry and Imagination or Fancy (the distinction between these two terms was not established till

<sup>1</sup> "I saw Hamlet Prince of Denmark played, but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majestie's being so long abroad." (*Diary of John Evelyn*, Nov. 26, 1661), quoted by T. S. Perry, *English Literature in the Eighteenth Century*. It should, however, be noted that the word *disgust* was in former times a milder term than it is now. (See Mr. R. W. Chapman's notes on Jane Austen's English, in his edition of *Emma*, 1923, p. 398.)

<sup>2</sup> *Observations on the Faerie Queene* (1754), p. 237.

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much later) was often alluded to by sixteenth-century writers ; but it would be vain to seek in the psychology and criticism of that time any clear definition of the meaning of the term *imagination*, which had been introduced into Latin as a translation of the Greek *φαντασία*, and which the Renaissance had inherited from Scholastic philosophy. Notions, however, which are now more definite to our minds were then held as it were in solution ; Bacon divided the human understanding into three faculties, referring history to Memory, philosophy to Reason, and poesy to Imagination<sup>1</sup> ; and Shakespeare expressed this connexion in words which have a strangely modern sound, when he wrote :

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact . . .  
And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.<sup>2</sup>

But with the growth of neo-classical criticism this large and indefinite meaning of imagination was narrowed and confined.

Hobbes's psychology, as Professor Spingarn has pointed out, became the groundwork of Restoration criticism, and to Hobbes the essential element in poetry was Reason. "Judgment," he wrote, "begets the strength and structure, and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poem."<sup>3</sup> The imagination came to be regarded

<sup>1</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, Book II.

<sup>2</sup> *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 7-17.

<sup>3</sup> Spingarn, vol. ii. p. 58. The introduction to these volumes contains a lucid history of the concept of Imagination in the earlier and later periods of criticism.

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as *la folle du logis*, in Descartes' phrase, or, in Dryden's words, as a wild, lawless faculty, which was the begetter of madness, dreams, and fever, but which, held strictly subordinate to Reason, could be usefully employed in finding, in the field of memory, illustrations, metaphors, and other useful ornaments for the sound structure of Reason. Or, at the most, following what Longinus had said of *φαντασία*, the power was attributed to the imagination of making the poet seem to behold the very things he is describing, and thus enabling him to display them to the life before the reader's eyes. But, as Dryden wrote, quoting from the famous French critic Rapin, "if this fancy be not regulated, it is a mere caprice, and utterly incapable to produce a reasonable and judicious poem." <sup>1</sup>

The qualities designated by these critics as *romantic* were therefore the mere product of unregulated imagination <sup>2</sup>; they were not reasonable, they did not imitate Nature, and they were therefore condemned as Gothic, unnatural, ridiculous and childish. We can therefore understand Pope's boast :

That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long,  
But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Essays of John Dryden* (Ker), vol. i. p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps more than a coincidence that in the first instance which has been found of the adjective *romantic*, it is used in close connexion with the word imagination. "As for *Imagination*, there is no question but that Function is mainly exercised in the chief seat of the Soul, those purer Animal Spirits in the fourth Ventricle of the Brain. I speak especially of that Imagination which is most free, such as we use in *Romantick Inventions*." (H. More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, 1659, p. 228.)

<sup>3</sup> *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 1735, 340-1.

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This theory of poetry was logical, consistent, and worthy of serious and judicious men, who, weary of wild conceits and ornaments and fantastic dreams, welcomed it with an enthusiasm which is difficult for us to share. But, like other theories of poetry, it did not correspond to the facts, and even in its heyday of triumph it began to collapse and crumble. A new way of looking at things began to grow up alongside it, based upon a greater appreciation of the value and importance of the imagination in works of art. With this gradual and only half-conscious shift of feeling, which began early in the eighteenth century in England, and flowered at last in the so-called Romantic Movement, the word *romantic* itself began to acquire fresh values and new meanings. It is no longer always used as a term of depreciation; Addison describes Milton's account of Thammuz as "finely Romantic,"<sup>1</sup> and Thomson speaks of a "fine, romantic kind of melancholy." The Gothic and romantic periods of history, the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan (for both these were regarded as Gothic and romantic), began to interest students; the old "romantic" poet Spenser, and the old tales of adventure and magic, came again into favour, and *romantic* began to mean something which, though absurd, was captivating to the imagination.<sup>2</sup> Horace Walpole confessed that he preferred the "romantic" scenes of the past,<sup>3</sup> and the Vicar of Wakefield tells, how owing to his wife's reading of

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, No. 303 (1712).

<sup>2</sup> "The subject and scene of this tragedy, so romantic and uncommon, are highly pleasing to the imagination." J. Warton on Pope (1757), ed. 1806, i. p. 71 n.

<sup>3</sup> Preface to second edition of *Castle of Otranto*, 1765.



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romances, two "romantic" names were given to his daughters.

In these usages of the English word *romantic*, the corresponding French adjective *romanesque* was a more or less exact equivalent, and is to be found in the early French translation of Pope's line :

If Folly grow romantic, I must paint it.<sup>1</sup>

But already, before the eighteenth century, another use had been found for the English word which *romanesque* did not translate. Along with its depreciatory use for the incidents and sentiments of the old romances, it was also used as an adjective of half-conscious appreciation for scenes and places like those which they describe. The adjective *romancy* or *romantic* was applied very early to the scenery of the neighbourhood of Wilton, where Sidney's *Arcadia* was composed. "The Arcadia," Aubrey wrote, "is about Vernditch and Wilton, and these romancy plaines and boscages did no doubt conduce to the heightening of Sir Phillip Sydney's phancie."<sup>2</sup> In another place he speaks of his rides through this "*romantick* country," with its flocks of sheep and nut-brown shepherdesses<sup>3</sup>; and earlier, under the date of 1654, Evelyn notes in his *Diary*, "Salisbury Plain reminded me of the pleasant lives of the shepherds we read of in romances."<sup>4</sup> But the word is also used for buildings : in 1666 Pepys called Windsor Castle "the most romantique castle that is in

<sup>1</sup> *Moral Essays*, Ep. II., 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Natural History of Wiltshire* (1847), p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> J. Britton, *Memoir of John Aubrey* (1845), pp. 32-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Evelyn's Diary*, ed. Bray, vol. ii, p. 81.

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the world”<sup>1</sup>; and even earlier, in 1654, Evelyn writes of a “very romantic” country-seat on the side of a “horrid Alp” near Bristol;<sup>2</sup> and under the date of 1679 he says, speaking of the Duke of Buckingham’s country house at Clifden, “The grotts in the chalky rock are pretty: ’tis a romantic object, and the place altogether answers the most poetical description that can be made of solitude, precipice, prospect, or whatever can contribute to a thing so very like their [the romancers’] imaginations.”<sup>3</sup> Sir William Temple wrote in his *Essay on Gardening* (1685) of the “romantic palace” of Alcinous described by Homer; and Addison in his *Remarks on Italy* (1705) says that on his journey between Marseilles and Genoa he was shown in the distance “The Deserts, which have been rendered so famous by the penance of Mary Magdalene who . . . is said to have wept away the rest of her life among these solitary rocks and mountains. It is so romantic a scene, that it has always probably given occasion to such chimerical relations.”<sup>4</sup> This use of the adjective in the description of places, meaning, as the *Oxford Dictionary* defines it, “redolent or suggestive of romance; appealing to the imaginations and feelings,” became more current after 1711, when Addison, in his famous essay on the ballad of Chevy Chase in the *Spectator*, spoke of “The fine romantic situation” of

<sup>1</sup> Feb. 26, 1666.

<sup>2</sup> *Evelyn*, vol. ii. p. 54. First noted I believe by T. S. Perry in his *English Literature in the Eighteenth Century*. In another entry of 1654 Evelyn uses the word again: *Bray*, vol. ii. p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 353-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Addison's Works*, edited by Richard Hurd, vol. i. p. 359.

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that battle.<sup>1</sup> Thomson writes in his *Seasons* of "oaks romantic," of a "romantic" mountain, of the "romantic" Caledonian landscape. Mason writes of "an old romantic forest"<sup>2</sup>; and even Dr. Johnson, who is not thought of as a romantic writer, and who almost invariably uses the word with its depreciatory meaning ("romantic and superfluous," "ridiculous and romantic," "romantic absurdities or incredible fictions," etc.), was so influenced by the prevalent fashion as to try his unwieldy hand at a landscape of this kind.

"When night overshadows a romantick scene, all is stillness, silence, and quiet; the poets of the grove cease their melody, the moon towers over the World in gentle majesty, men forget their labours and their cares, and every passion and pursuit is for a while suspended."<sup>3</sup>

The word *romantic* then, from the general meaning of "like the old romances," came to be used as a descriptive term for the scenes which they describe, old castles, mountains and forests, pastoral plains, waste and solitary places. In the earlier instances of the adjective the literary reference is more or less explicit; but by the eighteenth century it had come to express more generally the newly awakened, but as yet half-conscious, love for wild nature, for mountains and moors, for "the *Woods*, the *Rivers*, or *Sea-shores*," which Shaftesbury mentions as sought by those "who are deep in this *romantick way*."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, No. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Phelps, *The English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1902, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *The Adventurer*, No. 108, Nov. 17, 1753.

<sup>4</sup> Shaftesbury's *Moralists* (1709): Works (1732), vol. ii. p. 394.

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When English books of this period were translated into French, the translators either avoided the adjective in this usage, or rendered it by *romanesque* or *pittoresque*. *Romantick* or *romantique* is, however, found occasionally as a loan word from English<sup>1</sup>; about 1776 two French authors, one of them Letourneur, the translator of Shakespeare, and the other the Marquis de Girardin, the author of a book on landscape, made deliberate use of the word, giving in notes their reasons for borrowing this *mot Anglois*, as they called it. Monsieur A. François, in his brilliant essay on *Romantique*<sup>2</sup>—an essay from which much of my information about the French

<sup>1</sup> What is said to be the earliest instance of the word *romantique* in French is found in 1675, where it is obviously borrowed from English. In 1666 a M. de Sorbière published a *Relation d'un voyage en Angleterre*; and in 1668 Thomas Sprat wrote an anonymous little book of *Observations* on this book of travel, in which he says (p. 37) of Sorbière, "He speaks so *Romantically* of the *Vallies*, the *Hills*, and the *hedges* of *Kent*, that the *Authors* of *Clelia*, or *A strea*, scarce ever venture to say so much on the like occasion." In 1675 was published at Amsterdam an account of this *Réponse* of Sprat's, in which it is said, *L'auteur anonyme blâme Sorbière d'avoir parlé en termes romantiques des vallées, des montagnes et des haies verdoyantes du pays de Kent* (quoted, *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de France*, 1911, p. 440).

<sup>2</sup> *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Paris), vol. v. (1909). See also further notes by M. François in the *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue Suisse* (Lausanne), August and September, 1918. Senancour added to the thirty-eighth letter of his *Obermann* a fragment (the third fragment) *de l'expression Romantique et du Ranz des Vaches*, in which he attempts to define the distinction between *romantique* and *romanesque*, the one appealing to deep souls and true sensibilities, the other to *les imaginations vives et fleuries*. In the best French usage of to-day the distinction which is made between *romantique* and *romanesque* is, I am informed on good authority, somewhat different. *Romantique* is used with a more or less definite reference to the French Romantic Movement, and the ways of feeling and the tastes of the French "Romantics." It has, therefore, a certain historical connotation, and any

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history of the word is derived—reprints these notes, and they are of great importance, proving, as they do, the English origin of the word, and explaining its meaning. It meant more, they said, than *romanesque* or *pittoresque*: *romanesque* meant “chimerical,” or “fabulous,” while *pittoresque* describes a scene that strikes the eye and arouses admiration. But *romantic* implies an appeal as well to the feelings and the imagination: it not only describes the scene, but “the touching impression we receive from it.” Both authors enumerate the scenes that in the eighteenth century were considered romantic, the heaths, the sea, the clouds of the “Caledonian landscape,” mountains, torrents and waterfalls, and *le “lovely moon” des Anglois*. The word, M. François suggests, was probably brought to the notice of Rousseau by one of these authors, his friend Girardin; and it was finally given full rights of citizenship in the French language by Rousseau, when, in that incomparable masterpiece of his prose, his famous fifth *Rêverie du promeneur solitaire*, he wrote *les rives du Lac de Bienne sont plus sauvages & romantiques que celles du Lac de Geneve*.<sup>1</sup> The word soon became fashionable in France, and was included in the Dictionary of the French Academy in 1798, with the definition *Il se dit ordinairement des lieux, des paysages,*

manifestations of romanticism noted in an earlier epoch would be described as *romantisme avant la lettre*. In our phrases “romantic love,” “romantic friendship,” etc., “romantic” would be translated by *romanesque*; the use of *romantique* in this connexion generally implying emotions as they were felt and described by the contemporaries of Chateaubriand or Victor Hugo.

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1777, first published in 1782.

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*qui rappellent à l'imagination les descriptions des poèmes et des romans.*

These French definitions of *romantique* help us to a clear understanding of this special use of the word. Two points stand out clearly. In the first place *romantic* is, like *interesting*, *charming*, *exciting*, and many other adjectives, one of those modern words which describe, not so much the objective qualities of things, as our response to them, the feelings they arouse in the susceptible spectator. And secondly, if we examine the special subjective feeling described by *romantic*, we see that it is a literary emotion (as indeed the derivation of the word from *romant* implies); it is Nature seen through the medium of literature, through a mist of associations and sentiments derived from poetry and fiction. It is curious also to note the appearance and popularity of the word *picturesque* at the same time as *romantic*; for just as *romantic* means Nature seen through a literary medium, so *picturesque* was used to describe scenes that were like pictures, and were seen through the medium of another art, that of painting. Painting and literature had been from ancient times judged and criticized by their relation to Nature; but this curious reversal of the process, the projection of art into Nature, the contemplation of Nature through the coloured glass of art, and from a consciously literary or pictorial point of view, is an element that must not be neglected in any definition of the word we are discussing. It is a nice instance of those subtle changes in men's feelings, and in their ways of looking at the world, which are so important and yet so elusive, and which can perhaps be most definitely traced in the

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emergence of new terms, or in a change in the meaning of old ones.

*Picturesque* came by way of France to England from the country of painting, from Italy ; but *romantic* is a word, as our Swiss critic remarks, deposited on French soil by those currents of English thought and feeling which had reached it in the eighteenth century. Growing out of the heart of old romance, the word had absorbed into its meaning the glamour and newly-discovered beauty of moonlight and moors and mountains ; it had then travelled with the fashion for English gardens and the fame of Shakespeare to France, where, welcomed by the great apostle of Nature, Rousseau, it enriched the French language with a definite term for the feeling of which Frenchmen had already become conscious in the presence of wild nature, and which they had hitherto expressed by the vague term *je ne sais quoi*.<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted the definition of *romantique* given by

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau made use of this expression before he adopted *romantique* into his vocabulary, when, in his famous description of the mountains of Valais (which passage has been described as "the first flowering of romantic sentiment in French literature"), he says, *Enfin, ce spectacle a je ne sais quoi de magique, de surnaturel, qui ravit l'esprit et les sens* (*Nouvelle Héloïse*, 1760, i. *Lettre XXIII.*). For the history of the non-descriptive, non-explanatory, and purely identifying term of the French *Précieuses*, *je ne sais quoi*, see Spingarn, vol. i. p. c. It appears in England as a substantive in the latter part of the seventeenth century ; Shaftesbury attempted to define its critical significance, calling it "the unexpressible, the unintelligible, the *I-know-not-what* of Beauty," "a kind of *charm* or *enchantment* of which the artist himself can give no account" (*Characteristicks*, 1711, ed. 1731, vol. i. p. 332 ; vol. ii. p. 413). Another term for romantic landscape was *horrid*, and the pleasure it gave was described as "a pleasing kind of *horror*." Shaftesbury writes of the "horrid Graces of the *Wilderness*," etc. (*ibid.* ii. p. 393).

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the Dictionary of the French Academy when the word was formally admitted into the French language: Littré in his dictionary of a later date (1869), after repeating this definition, adds to the word quite another meaning. "It is used," he says, "of writers who emancipate themselves from the rules of composition and style established by the classical authors." To explain how the word acquired this additional sense, it is necessary to follow its adventures in Germany, for it was in Germany that this meaning was added to it, and it only became current in France as a borrowing from German sources.

The English word *romantic* was borrowed into German, as into French, late in the seventeenth century, *romanhaft* being (like *romanesque*) an older term in that language. *Romantisch* appears in a translation of Thomson's *Seasons*; it was used by Herder to describe wild and uncultivated landscape, and also by Wieland in his famous line:

Zum Ritt ins alte Romantische Land.<sup>1</sup>

But the word was applied not only to the scenes and landscapes described in the romances, but also, following certain precedents which can be found in English criticism,<sup>2</sup> to the literature itself which describes these scenes. Romantic literature and poetry, the literature and poetry of the Middle Ages, were, in contrast with

<sup>1</sup> See Grimm's *Wörterbuch*, s. v. *Romantisch*.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Warton, in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, (1754), speaks of "the romantic species of poetical composition introduced by the provençal bards" (p. 1). He describes Spenser as a "romantic poet" (p. 217), and to his *History of English Poetry* (1774) he prefixes a dissertation entitled "Of the origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe."



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those of the classical times, called *romantisch*; and from this comparison and contrast the German philosophers and critics, as they pondered over it in their Teutonic cogitations, evolved that great bugbear of modern criticism, the famous opposition between "classical and romantic." Goethe took upon Schiller and himself the responsibility of having added to the world's woes this famous subject of debate; <sup>1</sup> "the idea," he told Eckermann, "of the distinction between classical and romantic poetry, which is now spread over the whole world, and occasions so many quarrels and divisions, came originally from Schiller and myself. . . . The Schlegels took up this idea, and carried it further, so that it has now been diffused over the whole world; and every one talks about classicism and romanticism—of which nobody thought fifty years ago." <sup>2</sup>

The word *romantic*, thus brought in Germany into opposition with the antagonistic term "classical," became at the end of the eighteenth century the battle-cry of a school of wild poets and Catholic reactionaries. This war spread from Germany to France, the

<sup>1</sup> Although never emphasized or worked out as in Germany, the contrast between romantic and classical literature is occasionally alluded to in English criticism of the eighteenth century. Thus in his *Letters on Chivalry* (1762), Hurd says Tasso "trimmed between the Gothic and the Classic" (p. 114); the Faerie Queen "is a Gothic, not a classical poem" (p. 115). "Spenser tried to unite the Gothic, and the Classic unity" (p. 124). Thomas Warton, as Prof. Ker has pointed out, actually uses the words *romantic* and *classical* when, in writing of Dante, he speaks of "This wonderful compound of classical and romantic fancy" (*History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. 1781, p. 241). Hurd also contrasts the romantic and classic customs or "manners" (*Letters on Chivalry*, p. 148).

<sup>2</sup> Eckermann, *Conversations of Goethe*, March 21, 1830 (English Translation 1850, vol. ii. p. 273).

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seeds of it being carried thither by that adventurous literary lady, Madame de Staël. It was her famous book *De l'Allemagne* (written with the assistance of A. W. Schlegel, who had done much to elucidate—or darken—the meaning of these terms) which brought to France the new meanings which the word *romantic*<sup>1</sup> had acquired in Germany; and there, inscribed once more on the banners of young poets, it waved in the van of those still more famous battles of French Romanticism about which the world has heard so much. From France the word returned to the home of its pastoral youth,<sup>2</sup> curiously changed and transformed by its foreign experiences, its adventures in the company of German Jesuits, German philosophers, and French radicals, and loaded with a whole new world of meanings.

In the antithesis between romanticism and classicism, worked out by German thinkers, there was thus an explosive element, which made the word *romantic* into a famous battle-cry; the term coming to designate, as we see by Littré's definition, those writers who were

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo says, in the preface of 1824 to his *Odes et Ballades*, that it was this *femme de génie* who first pronounced the phrase *littérature romantique* in France.

<sup>2</sup> A writer in the *Quarterly Review* of October 1814, speaks of the attempts that had recently been made, especially in Germany, to simplify the old debate about the merits of the Ancients and the Moderns by calling the productions of antiquity *classic*, and those of modern time *romantic*; and adds in a note, "Madame de Staël has made the British public familiar with these expressions" (quoted *O.E.D.*). Byron in his answer to Bowles's criticism of Pope (1821) says that Schlegel and Madame de Staël have endeavoured to reduce poetry to "*two systems, classical and romantic*" (Byron's *Works*, vol. v. p. 554 n.). In a letter written in 1820 he says that these terms had not been in use when he left England (in 1816), (*ibid.*, p. 104).

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in rebellion against the classical rules of composition. The romantic poets, first in Germany and then in France, were the poets who, scorning and rejecting the models of the past and the received rules of composition, prided themselves on their freedom from law, and on their own artistic spontaneity. The origin and history of this aspect of Romanticism is of considerable interest, and has attracted much critical attention. It has not, however, been treated as yet from the point of view of lexicography, although the lexicographer can, I think, do something to elucidate that history. For this movement was already in possession of three other battle-cries before *Romantic* was inscribed upon its banners ; and it will be necessary to give some account of these three terms in order to make clear its full meaning.

### II

The first of these terms which I shall treat of is the great modern word *originality*. This word is derived of course from the adjective *original*, a word which has certain religious associations, since it is first found in English in the phrase "original sin," but which, as a term of literary criticism, comes from the vocabulary of painting. It was easy to borrow from painting the distinction between an original picture and a copy ; this distinction is found in literary criticism in the middle of the seventeenth century ;<sup>1</sup> it was adopted

<sup>1</sup> " 'Tis with Originall Poems as with Originall Pieces of Painters, whose Copies abate the excessive price of the first Hand," Sir W. Davenant, *Preface to Gondobert*, 1650 (Spingarn, vol. ii. p. 5).

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by Dryden, who speaks of Shakespeare's Juliet and Desdemona as "originals";<sup>1</sup> and it soon became a current term, especially with reference to Shakespeare, being authorized by Pope's famous sentence in his preface to Shakespeare's works, "If ever any Author deserved the name of an *Original*, it was Shakespear. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature." From the word *original* in its use as an adjective, a noun was formed, the abstract term *originality*,<sup>2</sup> to designate the quality of first-handedness in a work of art. All art, the early critics agreed, was imitation; but there were two kinds of imitation—the imitation of Nature (by Nature they meant very much what we mean by "life"), and the imitation of other works of art. The imitation of Nature was original imitation: the writer who drew his materials from the observation of Nature was an original writer. The imitation of other artists was, as a critic of the earlier part of the eighteenth century said, "the bane of writing," "for Poetry, in this respect, resembles Painting; no Performance in it can

<sup>1</sup> Dryden's *Essays* (Ker), vol. i. p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> *Originalité* has been found in French in 1699; the word was admitted in the Dictionary of the French Academy in 1762. The earliest instance I have found of the word in English is in a letter of Gray's of May 24, 1742 (*Gray's Letters*, ed. Tovey, vol. i. p. 107). On July 14 of the same year Horace Walpole wrote to Mann at Florence, about a picture which he wished Mann to purchase for Sir Robert Walpole; "It is one of the most engaging pictures I ever saw. I have no qualms about its originality" (*Walpole's Letters*, ed. Toynbee, vol. i. p. 256). The word soon came into fairly common use among the more romantically inclined critics, and in 1766 the Shakespearean commentator, E. Capell, published a book with the title *Reflections on Originality in Authors*.

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be valuable, which is not an Original.”<sup>1</sup> Primary and original copying was called invention,<sup>2</sup> or finding (*εὕρεσις*); without invention, as Dryden said, “a painter is but a copier, and a poet but a plagiary of others”<sup>3</sup>; invention in respect of the matter of a work of art was simply observation; though in respect to the form, the disposition and embellishing of the work were also called “invention.” Originality was simply newness and truth of observation or invention. The great original poets, like Homer and Shakespeare, were those who had most directly imitated Nature, and given the richest and most profound renderings of what they found.

The term *invention*, which criticism had inherited from classical rhetoric, served for a long time as a name for that finding in Nature of something new to copy which was called *originality*. Invention was defined by Temple as “the mother of poetry.” “The first happiness of the poet’s imagination,” Dryden wrote, “is properly invention, or finding of the thought”<sup>4</sup>; and, in his life of Milton, Dr. Johnson, declared “the highest praise of genius is original invention.”

This notion of primary copying, or “invention,” seems to have been regarded for some time as a satisfactory explanation of originality, and is repeated as

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Welsted, *A Dissertation concerning the State of Poetry* (1724), printed in Durham’s *Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century* (1895), p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> “This primary or original copying, which in the ideas of Philosophy is *Imitation*, is, in the language of Criticism, called *INVENTION*” (Hurd, *A Discourse on Poetical Imitation*). In Hurd’s edition of Horace’s *Epistolae ad Pisones et Augustum*, 1757, vol. ii. p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Dryden’s *Essays* (Ker), vol. ii. p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Ker, vol. i. p. 15.

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late as Hazlitt, who said that "Originality consists in seeing Nature for yourself."<sup>1</sup> But even the earlier critics seem to have become vaguely aware that there were certain aspects of poetry for which the word *invention* was not quite an adequate description. For *invention* by its etymology meant "finding"; it was primarily a process of observing and copying Nature—and yet was all poetry nothing more than an imitation and an adornment of Nature? Was there nothing more in an original author than fresh and primary observation? The date at which this imitation-theory first began to break down can be neatly fixed by the appearance of another term which was destined to replace the word *invention* in many of its uses. In the works of Shakespeare, who, it was agreed, was the most original writer of modern times, there was one element which, however much they might stretch the meaning of the word, could hardly be called an imitation of Nature. This element was the supernatural, the "magical World of Spirits," the fairies, the witches and midnight ghosts, which seemed as living and real as the human beings in his plays. Dryden, faced with this difficulty, tried to justify the description of "fairies, pigmies, and the extraordinary effects of magic," by saying that the poet was allowed the liberty of describing things which existed in popular belief (popular belief being part of "Nature"), and thus Shakespeare's *Tempest* and his *Midsummer Night's Dream* were to be defended.<sup>2</sup> When, however, Dryden came to write

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, vol. xii. p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> *Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence* (Ker), vol. i. p. 187.

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of the character of Caliban, he seems to have felt that the imitation-theory, the theory that, as he put it, "the poet dresses truth and adorns Nature, but does not alter them," was stretched almost to the breaking-point. There was, he seems to have felt, a difference between "drawing" characters which had existed, or might have existed in Nature—or which others had believed to exist—and representing a being like Caliban, "a species of himself, begotten by an incubus on a witch," and yet with a person and a character of his own, and with a "language as hobgoblin as his person

### III

I put some emphasis on this passage in Dryden because it marks, however vaguely, a real turning-point in English criticism; and also because there slipped into Dryden's vocabulary in this passage about Caliban an alternative word for "invented" which was destined to be echoed and repeated, and to acquire, in the process of time, a very great importance. "Shakespeare," he says, "seems there to have created a person which was not in Nature, a boldness which, at first sight, would appear intolerable."<sup>1</sup> Dryden was not the first writer to employ in literary criticism the word *create*, with its solemn religious associations,<sup>2</sup> but its use in this connexion, before he gave it currency, was sporadic and

<sup>1</sup> *Preface to Troilus and Cressida* (1679), Ker, vol. i. p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Although *creare* is not uncommon in classical Latin, *condere* is the more usual term. *Creare*, with its derivative *creator* (rare as a classical term), is very common in ecclesiastic Latin, where it expressed the non-classical idea of creation out of nothing—that central doctrine of a special creation out of nothing upon which the Christian theology is based.

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unusual.<sup>1</sup> We find it, after Dryden, in the writings of Sir William Temple ;<sup>2</sup> and Addison, who echoes much of Dryden's criticism, popularized in the *Spectator* this use of the word, when writing of "fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits" (in which

*Condere*, like the Greek *κρίειν*, implied the making, or the bringing into being, of something out of pre-existent material. In the later use of *create* was explicit the meaning which the English word inherited, and which Dr. Johnson defined, in his *Dictionary*, as "to form out of nothing."

<sup>1</sup> The element of "making" implied in the etymology of "Poet" was generally translated by the word "maker or "feigner" by the earlier English critics, such as Sidney and Webbe; Puttenham, however, says that if poets could "make all things out of them selves, without any subject of veritie, then they be (by maner of speech) as creating gods" (G. Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, vol. ii. p. 4). Puttenham is no doubt echoing here the famous phrase from Scaliger's *Poetics*: *velut alter deus condere* (*ibid.* i. 386). Donne, in one of his sermons (preached probably in 1632), says: "Poetry is a counterfeit Creation, and makes things that are not, as though they were" (*LXXX. Sermons*, 1640, p. 266). Bacon uses the word with reference to discoveries, *Inventa quasi novae creationes sunt et divinatorum operum imitamenta* (*Nov. Org.* i. 129). Shakespeare uses it of mental images:

A dagger of the mind, a false creation.

(*Macb.* II. i. 38.)

This is the very coinage of your brain:

This bodiless creation ecstasy

Is very cunning in. (*Ham.* III. iv. 138.)

Shelley refers in his *Defence of Poetry* to the "bold and true words of Tasso: *non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta*," and he repeats the phrase with some variation in a letter to Peacock of August 16, 1818. This, if Shelley quotes correctly, is an early use of *creatore* in connexion with poetry; but none of Shelley's editors seem to have been able to find the source of the quotation. I have searched for it in vain in Tasso's works.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek name of poet signifies, he says, "Makers or Creators, such as raise admirable Frames and Fabricks out of nothing." *Of Poetry* (1690) (Spingarn, vol. iii. p. 74). In his *Essay of Gardening* (1685) Temple describes building and gardening as "a sort of Creation."



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"fairy way of writing" Shakespeare "has incomparably excelled all others"), he says, "we are led as it were into a new creation," and "cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them."<sup>1</sup> In speaking of the power of affecting the imagination, which "is the very life and highest perfection of poetry," he says, in a phrase which became famous: "It has something in it like creation. It bestows a kind of existence, and draws up to the reader's view several objects which are not to be found in being."<sup>2</sup> Shaftesbury, in his *Characteristicks* (1711), joins together the notion of originality and creation, when he somewhat ironically compares the new and free way of writing with the manufacture of silks and stuffs; each new pattern he says, must be "an original," and the designer must "work *originally*, and in a manner *create* each time anew."<sup>3</sup>

*Originality* thus acquired a new signification; it came to mean, in the critical parlance of the time, not only the direct observation of Nature, but also the invention or creation of things (for the most part supernatural beings)<sup>4</sup> which did not exist in Nature. This notion of "creation," and of the artist as a

<sup>1</sup> On the *Pleasures of Imagination* (*Spectator*, No. 419, July 1, 1712).

<sup>2</sup> *Spectator*, No. 421, July 3, 1712.

<sup>3</sup> Edition of 1732, vol. iii. pp. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> The notion that poetic creation was principally concerned with the creation of supernatural beings remained a commonplace of eighteenth-century criticism. Addison refers to it (with especial reference to Caliban) in the *Spectator* (No. 279); it is repeated by Joseph Warton (again with reference to Caliban) in an Essay in the *Adventurer* (No. 93). The German-Swiss critic Bodmer echoed it in Germany with reference to the angels "created by Milton," and it found its way into

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"creator," soon became current, and before long it began to beget a group of other terms which were needed for its adequate expression. Among these we may note the important adjective *creative*, which, first appearing in the seventeenth century,<sup>1</sup> became, towards the end of the third decade of the eighteenth century, a common adjective in literary criticism. We find it usually in connexion with the words "imagination" or "fancy," for it was to the imagination that this power of creation was ascribed. David Mallet begins his *Excursion* (1728) with the invocation :

Companion of the Muse, Creative Power,  
Imagination !

Thomson in his *Summer* writes of Shakespeare's "creative fancy," and Joseph Warton of his "lively creative imagination," and calls the *Tempest* "the most striking instance of his creative power. He has thus given the reins to his boundless imagination, and has carried the romantic, the wonderful, the wild to the most pleasing extravagance."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Warton, in his *History of Poetry*, speaks of "the romantic and creative genius of the Arabs,"<sup>3</sup> and in Duff's *Essay on Original Genius* (1767) we come on a phrase which has a very modern sound, when he calls "creative

the aesthetic criticism of Immanuel Kant. Hazlitt, in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817, p. 116), mentions Caliban and the supernatural element in *The Tempest* as the "fantastic creation" of Shakespeare's mind.

<sup>1</sup> "This Divine, miraculous, creative power" (Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, 1678). Quoted O.E.D.

<sup>2</sup> *The Adventurer*, No. 93, Sept. 25, 1753.

<sup>3</sup> Edition of 1871, vol. i. p. 93.

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Imagination the distinguishing characteristic of true Genius." <sup>1</sup>

In phrases such as the above we can see to what extent the imagination has been reinstated as the faculty to which poetry was addressed, and by which it was produced. But if poetry was the product of the imagination ; if the imagination was "creative," and "originality" was the mark of its "creations," then a word was needed to describe this special kind of poetic imagination, and the poet who possessed it. Fortunately for the critics of the time there was a word already current which was found capable of absorbing into itself these new conceptions. This was the word *Genius*, the last of the four terms which form the subject of my essay.

### IV

To recount in detail the history of the portentous word *Genius* would exhaust my own patience, and still more that of my readers <sup>2</sup> ; the briefest summary must suffice for us here. In classical Latin the word *Genius* meant primarily a person's tutelary god or attendant spirit ; and this meaning still survives in our phrase, some one's "good or evil genius." It was also used, but rarely in Latin, as more or less a synonym for *ingenium*, "natural bent and disposition." In this latter sense the word frequently appears in English in the seventeenth century, meaning both the endowment

<sup>1</sup> p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> A very summary account of the history of *Genius* occupies fifty-two columns in Grimm's great German Dictionary (article *Genie*).

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of natural ability or capacity, and also, occasionally, the person so endowed. Dr. Johnson (who in his *Dictionary* did not recognize our modern use of the word) defined the "true Genius" as a "mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction."<sup>1</sup> But long before Dr. Johnson's time the word had begun to acquire other meanings and associations. The first of these (inherited from the Latin *ingenium*) was that of those special endowments and abilities which fitted a person for some special task. "A Poet," Sidney wrote in his *Apology for Poetry*, "no industrie can make, if his owne *Genius* bee not carried unto it";<sup>2</sup> and Dryden's phrase, "a happy genius is the gift of nature," is well known.<sup>3</sup> The word in these uses is equivalent to *talent*, and Dryden uses the two words as synonymous when he says that the description of "humours" was the particular "genius and talent" of Ben Jonson.<sup>4</sup> The word came to be tinged also with religious associations, for *Genius* was the name of a god or spiritual being; and later on in the eighteenth century it was used to translate the Arabic word *Jinn*, the good or evil spirits of Arabian mythology. Before, however, this infusion of oriental mystery, the word came to be connected with the ancient term *inspiration*, which, with its half-evaporated classical and religious associations, lingered on in the poetical vocabulary, with the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Cowley*.

<sup>2</sup> G. Gregory Smith, vol. i. p. 195. Sidney goes on to quote the proverb, *Orator fit, Poeta nascitur*. This and the more common saying, *Poeta nascitur, non fit*, have not been traced further back than the fifteenth century. *Ibid.* p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> Ker, vol. ii. p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 86.

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meaning, as Dr. Johnson gave it, of "infusion into the mind by a superior power." This notion of inspiration, of enthusiasm or daemonic possession, of the "divine madness" of the poet, is a bit of almost prehistoric psychology, which, embedded in Greek poetry, elaborated and echoed by Aristotle, had bequeathed to the critics of the Renaissance a set of phrases and ideas quite inconsistent with their theory that art was a product of reason, and a copying of Nature. Nor did they attempt to reconcile the two ; but the rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to whom such words as *enthusiasm* and *inspiration* were, from their use by religious fanatics, especially repugnant, became more conscious of this difficulty, which they tried to solve by dismissing the notions these words expressed as impostures or delusions. Hobbes called the invocation of the Muses the reasonless imitation of a foolish custom, "by which a man, enabled to speak wisely from the principles of Nature and his own meditation, loves rather to be thought to speak by inspiration, like a Bagpipe." <sup>1</sup> Sir William Davenant declared that the word inspiration was a "dangerous word," inherited from the dominion-loving poets of the pagan times, who were also priests, and who acquired reverence for themselves by their pretence to inspiration ; <sup>2</sup> and Dryden, after saying of Aeschylus that he was "always in a rapture, . . . the inspiration was still upon him, he was ever tearing it upon the tripes," goes on to confute those who would justify the madness of poetry from the authority of Aristotle, by suggesting that the

<sup>1</sup> *Answer to Davenant* (1650), Spingarn, vol. ii. p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

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text was corrupt; Aristotle had not written that poetry had always something in it either of a man of happy endowments or of a madman; the passage should read "that it belongs to a witty man, but not to a madman."<sup>1</sup>

"Every Ass that's Romantick believes he's inspired," a seventeenth century critic wrote<sup>2</sup>; and the notion that the pretence to inspiration was either a delusion, or more probably an imposture of poets, devised to give worth to their poetry in vulgar minds, recurs not infrequently in the criticism of the time. But no ridicule could banish this idea of inspiration, based as it was on real experience; for poets, finding that their ideas came to them in special moments of excitement, and from some source as it were outside themselves, would by a natural symbolism still call the poetic impulse a gift from the gods.

The conception, moreover, of a person's genius as his natural bent or disposition, would naturally lead to the notion of this prompting or guiding genius being itself a kind of inspiration; and as early as 1634 we find Sir William Alexander declaring his opinion "That every Author hath his own Genius, directing him by a secret Inspiration to that wherein he may most excel."<sup>3</sup> This inborn and, as it were, inspired element in the conception of genius was emphasized by the distinction which was early drawn in English criticism between

<sup>1</sup> Ker, *vol. i. p. 222*. This absurd emendation (*ov* for *η*) was borrowed, as Professor Ker points out, from the French critic, Rapin. *Ibid.* p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wolsley, *Preface to Rochester's Valentianian* (1685), Spingarn, *vol. iii. p. 12*.

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Alexander's *Anacrisis*, Spingarn, *vol. i. p. 185*.

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two kinds of writers, the writers whose talent or genius was the product of study and imitation, and those who were indebted to their natural endowments alone. This distinction, which had been inherited from classical times, and had become a commonplace of Renaissance criticism, was much elaborated in England, and often dwelt on with reference to Shakespeare. It was in fact the tremendous achievement of Shakespeare, his "originality," his miraculous power of "creating" supernatural beings, as well as his unprecedented and untutored genius, as they conceived it, which did more than anything else to disintegrate the neo-classical theory of poetry, and replace it by the notions that are expressed in the terms which are the subject of this chapter. For Shakespeare, who "wanted Art" as Ben Jonson put it, who was, in Milton's phrase, "Fancy's child," and whose strains were "native woodnotes wild," came more and more to be regarded as the great example of the "natural" genius, who by the power of his inborn gifts alone, quite unassisted by art or learning, reached the most sublime levels of artistic achievement. "The Poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed," as Pope expressed it in his famous preface; and although some critics regretted his ignorance ("what would he not have been if he had had learning!"),<sup>1</sup> there were others, even in the seventeenth century, who, like Sir William Temple, suggested that learning might perhaps weaken invention, and lessen the force and growth of genius.<sup>2</sup> Addison,

<sup>1</sup> Dennis in Nichol Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *On Poetry*, Spingarn, vol. iii. p. 48.

indeed, who had proclaimed Shakespeare as a "natural" genius, did not claim for him any superiority on this account; but others were more bold, and by the middle of the eighteenth century the glorification of unlearned genius had reached such a point that Dr. Johnson felt constrained to denounce the tendency to rely upon it as "the mental disease of the present generation,"<sup>1</sup> and Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses* were written for the purpose of warning art-students against what he called "the phantom of Inspiration," the false opinion, "too prevalent among artists, of the imaginary powers of native genius, and its sufficiency in great works."<sup>2</sup>

We have thus seen how the notions of Originality, and those of Creation and Inspiration, with the ancient and august religious associations of these terms, contributed to deepen the word *genius* with mysterious significations, although we still find it used at the same time—and often by the same writers—with its older and more commonplace meaning, as when we read of a "polite," an "ordinary," a "plodding," and even a "low and grovelling genius."

In the twenty-five years which followed the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of *Essays*, *Reflections*, and *Dissertations* were published, in which the problems connected with Shakespeare, with Originality, and Genius were discussed.<sup>3</sup> Most of these volumes

<sup>1</sup> *Rambler*, No. 154, Sept. 7, 1751.

<sup>2</sup> Reynolds's *Discourses*, ed. Fry, 1905, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Among those which I have made use of in writing this paper may be mentioned:

1751 Richard Hurd, *A Discourse concerning Poetical Imitation*. (In Hurd's edition of Horace's *Epistolæ ad Pisones et Augustum*, vol. ii.)



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have been long forgotten ; to the lexicographer they are still of interest, but to others their perusal would be indeed a penitential task, for of all the dusty Saharas and Dead Seas of literature, there are none, save perhaps those of old theology, which are more desolate than the arid wastes of obsolete aesthetic speculation.

But these old essays and speculations had their date of eager interest ; they represent, no doubt, an immense amount of thinking under the large wigs of that period, and echo a great deal of enthusiastic eighteenth-century discussion. And among them there is one little book which has become famous abroad, and is still dimly remembered in England, where it has been reprinted in recent years. This is the *Conjectures on Original Composition*, published anonymously in 1759, but written by Edward Young, the author of the famous *Night Thoughts*, then in his seventy-seventh year. The book was mainly written, he tells his readers, with the purpose of preserving and giving publicity to an anecdote about Addison ; how, when he was on his death-bed, he summoned his stepson in order that he might

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1754 Thomas Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene*.

1755 William Sharpe, *A Dissertation upon Genius*.

1756 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

1757 Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, vol. i.

1759 Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*.

1762 Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*.

1766 E. Capell, *Reflections on Originality in Authors*.

1767 [W. Duff], *An Essay on Original Genius*.

1769 Mrs. Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*.

1769 Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer*.

1774 Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*.

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"see in what peace a Christian can die" ; and there is much pious writing, such as we might expect from an elderly clergyman, in the little volume. But somewhat incongruously infused into this old bottle we find much of the new and intoxicating wine of the Romantic Movement, the glorification of Genius, the praise of originality, the scorn of imitation, and of obedience to the old rules of classical composition, and a buoyant and almost boyish belief in progress, in the future possibilities of great achievement for the emancipated spirit of mankind. The best way, however, to give an impression of these aspects of Young's *Conjectures* will be to quote some of the sentences which are found in it, and which, as we shall see, exploded almost like bombs abroad :

"*Imitations* are of two kinds ; one of Nature, one of Authors : The first we call *Originals*, and confine the term *Imitation* to the second." (p. 9.)

"An *Original*, tho' but indifferent (its *Originality* being set aside), yet has something to boast." (p. 11.)

"An *Original* may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature ; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius ; it *grows*, it is not made : *Imitations* are often a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics*, *Art*, and *Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own." (p. 12.)

"*Originals* can arise from Genius only." (p. 34.)

"What, for the most part, mean we by Genius, but the Power of accomplishing great things without the means generally reputed necessary to that end ? A Genius differs from a good Understanding, as a Magician from a good Architect ; *That* raises his structure by means invisible ; *This* by the skilful use of common tools. Hence Genius has ever been supposed to partake of something Divine." (pp. 26-7.)

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"*Sacer nobis inest Deus*, says Seneca. With regard to the Moral world, *Conscience*, and with regard to the Intellectual, *Genius*, is that God within." (pp. 30-1.)

"In the Fairyland of Fancy, Genius may wander wild; there it has creative power, and may reign arbitrarily over its own empire of Chimeras." (p. 37.)

"So boundless are the bold excursions of the human mind, that in the vast void beyond real existence, it can call forth shadowy beings, and unknown worlds, as numerous, as bright, and, perhaps, as lasting, as the stars; such quite-original beauties we may call Paradisaical, *Natos sine semine flores*, Ovid." (p. 70.)

"Many a Genius, probably, there has been, which could neither write, nor read." (p. 35.)

"Learning we thank, Genius we revere; That gives us pleasure, This gives us rapture; That informs, This inspires; and is itself inspired." (p. 36.)

"To the neglect of Learning, Genius sometimes owes its greater Glory." (p. 29.)

"Genius is from Heaven, Learning from man." (p. 36.)

"A Star of the first magnitude among the Moderns was *Shakespeare*; among the Ancients, *Pindar*; who (as Vossius tells us) boasted of his No-learning, calling himself the Eagle, for his Flight above it." (p. 30.)

"An Adult Genius comes out of Nature's hand, as *Pallas* out of *Jove's* head, at full growth, and mature: *Shakespeare's* Genius was this kind." (p. 31.)

"*Shakespeare* mingled no water with his wine, lower'd his Genius by no vapid Imitation." (p. 78.)

"Who knows if *Shakespeare* might not have thought less, if he had read more?" (p. 81.)

"Born *Originals*, how comes it to pass that we die *Copies*?" (p. 42.)

"The less we copy the renowned Antients, we shall resemble them the more." (p. 21.)

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"Let us build our Compositions with the Spirit, and in the Taste, of the Antients; but not with their Materials." <sup>1</sup> (p. 22.)

Phrases with meanings similar to these, if not so pointedly expressed, might be collected from the other treatises I have mentioned; but Young's little book has a much greater importance in the history of culture owing to the fact that it was almost immediately translated into German, where it created, as Herder wrote, an "electrical" effect, and kindled a blaze of fire in German hearts.

Already, before this date, the ideas of the new criticism had begun to spread in Germany, through the influence of translations from English, and especially, through the writings of the German-Swiss critic Bodmer, who had translated Addison's *Essays on Milton*, and made famous his phrase about the imagination, "It has something in it like creation." This idea of the "creative imagination," suggested but not elaborated by Addison, had become familiar in Germany, and the word *creative*, translated by *schöpferisch*, had aroused the indignation of the pious, one of them describing it as a punishable and blasphemous expression, since the attribute of creation belonged alone to God, and should not be attributed to his creatures.<sup>2</sup>

But in 1760, when Young's book was translated,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Discourse on Lyric Poetry* (1728), Young had already emphasized this notion that the methods, not the works, of the ancients, should be imitated.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to the *Poems* of D. Triller, 1751. Quoted in Grimm's *Wörterbuch*, and more fully in Lessing's *Schriften* (1838), vol. iii. p. 214. Campe proposed *Schöpfergeist* ("creative spirit") as a translation for *genius* (Grimm, *Wörterbuch*).

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the time was ripe for a wider and more enthusiastic reception of this new doctrine. The new generation of Germans were eager to free themselves from the tyranny of French classicism ; and in the book of Young, and the notions he promulgated, they found the faith, the gospel, and the watchwords which they needed. Young boldly proclaimed the superiority of the original genius, who went direct to Nature, who performed great things by the force of his own inborn powers, untaught by rules and precedents and models ; and he declared that Shakespeare was the great original genius of modern times.

In England the popular conception of Shakespeare as a wild, irregular, untutored genius was generally stated apologetically ; he had, it was admitted, great faults, but these were condoned by his great and original merits. Above all things he was regarded as inimitable ; but Young, on the contrary, declared that he must be imitated ; writers should try to be original like Shakespeare, should imitate, not his works, but his methods ; they should, like him, disregard all rules and traditions, and go direct to Nature.

It was on this conception of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's methods, and on Young's belief that they could and should be imitated, that the Germans seized with propagandist zeal. The duty of every artist to rely upon his own gifts and inspiration became the fashionable doctrine ; and in that wild period, which was called at the time the *Genieperiode*, but has since acquired the name of *Sturm und Drang*, the great watchwords *Genius*, *Originality*, and *Creative* acquired a resonance, an aggressive and propagandist momentum, which they

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had certainly never possessed in England.<sup>1</sup> And these terms acquired moreover in Germany a much greater profundity of philosophical meaning, and became the foundation-stones of a metaphysical aesthetic ; when we read in Kant that " creative imagination is the true source of genius and the basis of originality " ; that Genius makes rules instead of receiving them ; that it embodies in art aesthetic ideas which are creations of the imagination, and suggest more than can be exhausted by any definite concept, we become aware that our home-bred English words have indeed undergone a strange sea-change by being so deeply immersed in the vast and bottomless ocean of Teutonic thought.

What we now call the English Romantic Movement of the eighteenth century hardly deserves indeed, as Professor Beers has pointed out, to be called a movement, since it had " no leader, no programme, no organ, no theory of art, and very little coherence." <sup>2</sup> The dilettante bachelors and Church of England clergymen,

<sup>1</sup> Readers of Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung* will remember how he embodied these watchwords in a witty address to a Leipzig baker :

Who bakes

With creative genius, original cakes.

(*Du bäckst . . .*

*Mit schöpfrischem Genie, originelle Kuchen*) (Book VII.)

German critics are agreed in tracing these watchwords and the ideas they embody to English sources, and above all to Young's *Conjectures* (see *Edward Young in Germany*, by J. L. Kind, New York, 1906).

From *Genie* the Germans coined the adjectives *genial* and *genialisch*, meaning " characterized by genius " in its modern sense. Our word *genial* comes through the Latin *genialis*, from *genius*, meaning " social enjoyment." The French word *genial* is borrowed from German, with its German meaning.

<sup>2</sup> *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, by Henry A. Beers, London (1899), p. 422.

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Gray and Horace Walpole, the Rev. Edward Young, the Rev. Thomas<sup>1</sup> and the Rev. Joseph Warton, Bishop Hurd, and Bishop Percy, were most of them hardly "Romanticists" at all, but rather amateurs of novelties which amused them; and although in the

<sup>1</sup> One of the pioneers of the mediæval revival in England was Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, a Poet Laureate in 1785. Professor Beers rightly calls attention to the interest, in the history of the English Romantic Movement, of his poem on Sir Joshua Reynolds's window in New College Chapel (published in 1784). Warton confesses that, "a faithless truant to the classic page," he had loved to explore old mansions and castles, and Gothic churches,

"Where SUPERSTITION, with capricious hand  
In many a maze the wreathed window plann'd,  
With hues romantic ting'd the gorgeous pane,  
To fill with holy light the wondrous fane;"

but then he goes on to tell how the "chaste design" and just proportions of Reynolds's window disenchanted his cheated mind,

"Broke the Gothic chain  
And brought my bosom back to truth again."

He then urges, in manner of a palinode, that the brawny prophets, the bearded patriarchs, the virgins and angels, the martyrdoms and miracles of the Gothic glass, should

"No more the sacred window's round disgrace,  
But yield to Grecian groupes the shining space."

To visit New College Chapel with these verses, and attempt to recapture the mood of this recantation, would be a useful exercise in the historical study of bygone ways of feeling. The same conflict is expressed by Horace Walpole's account of his feelings at Stowe. "The Grecian Temple is glorious: this I openly worship: in the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic building" (*Letters*, ed. Toynbee, vol. iii. p. 181). It is amusing to learn that Reynolds was not at all convinced of the genuineness of Warton's recantation. "I owe you great obligations," he wrote him, "for the sacrifice which you have made, or pretend to have made, to modern art: I say pretend; for though it is allowed that you have, like a true poet, feigned marvellously well, and have opposed the two different styles with the skill of a Connoisseur, yet I may be allowed to entertain some doubts of the sincerity of your conversion. I have no great confidence in the recantation of such an old offender." Thomas Warton, *Poetical Works* (1802), vol. i. pp. lxxx-i.

course of their mild speculations they may have written—and indeed did write—some of these very phrases, they had attached no metaphysical meanings of dark profundity to their casual expressions.

When we now use the word *genius*, the contrasted term *talent* comes into our minds, but this differentiation and contrast, like that of *romantic* and *classical*, is the product of German—or perhaps of French—and not of English cogitation. The *Oxford Dictionary* says :

“It was by German writers of the eighteenth century that the distinction between ‘genius’ and ‘talent,’ which had some foundation in French usage,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This distinction was noticed by Condillac in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), I. ii. par. 104, when, writing of invention, he says, *Il y en a de deux espèces : le talent et le génie. Celui-là combine les idées d'un art ou d'une science connue, d'une manière propre à produire les effets qu'on en doit naturellement attendre. . . . Celui-ci ajoute au talent l'idée d'esprit, en quelque sorte, créateur. Il invente de nouveaux arts, ou, dans le même art, de nouveaux genres égaux. . . . Un homme à talent a un caractère qui peut appartenir à d'autres ; . . . Un homme de génie a un caractère original, il est inimitable.*

The conception of Genius was the product of the whole movement of European thought ; and to this France, as well as England and Germany, made its contribution. But the French conception was not as near to our modern conception as the above quotation would seem to indicate. The connexion between imagination and genius was first suggested in England ; in France genius was more connected with *esprit*. Condillac denied any real creative power to genius ; its activity consisted for him in the power of combining in new relations the materials furnished by experience. This, he said, was invention. Genius possessed invention in a higher degree than talent ; it was an *esprit simple* which was able to find what no one had ever been able to discover before (see L. Dewaule, *Condillac et la psychologie anglaise contemporaine* (1892), pp. 89-90). The notions current in France on these subjects are embodied and discussed by Voltaire in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, articles *Esprit*, *Génie*, *Imagination*, etc.



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was sharpened into the strong antithesis which is now universally current, so that the one term is hardly ever defined without reference to the other."

Like the antithesis of romanticism and classicism, that between *genius* and *talent* was suggested now and then by English writers, without, however, any emphasis being laid upon it, or any clear distinction drawn ; and the word *genius*, with its pagan, and *talent*, with its biblical suggestions, were practically synonymous until the words came back again from Germany. But, as the *Oxford Dictionary* points out, "when 'genius,' as native endowment, came to be contrasted with the aptitudes that can be acquired by study, the approach to the modern sense was often very close."

This distinction indeed grew naturally, and indeed inevitably, out of the conceptions of originality and creation which we have been studying. Genius was, as Kant defined it, *Originalgeist*, Originality was its special mark, it was a Creative Talent. The difference was a difference, not of degree, but of kind ; Talent could be acquired ; it achieved its effects by imitation and the obedience to rules ; Genius was a gift ; it was of a nature which obeyed no laws, was a law to itself, and could not be acquired.<sup>1</sup>

The fire which was kindled in German hearts by these watchwords, and the revolutionary ideas they embodied, flamed up in Germany again at the end of

<sup>1</sup> With regard to present usage, the *Oxford Dictionary* says, "The difference between *genius* and *talent* has been formulated very variously by different writers, but there is general agreement in regarding the former as the higher of the two, as 'creative' and 'original,' and as achieving its results by instinctive perception and spontaneous activity, rather than by processes which admit of being distinctly analyzed."

the eighteenth century, when a new revolt blazed out in that literary movement which adopted the word *Romantisch* as its battle-cry and title. This title, and the doctrines and propaganda it stood for, was, as we have seen, brought from her German visit by Madame de Staël to set literary France ablaze; and thus the word *romantique*, first borrowed as an epithet for landscape, became in France a literary term to describe those emancipated and revolutionary French writers whom Littré describes.

First from Germany, and then later from France, the echoes and influence of the German and French Romantic Movements began to cross the Channel, bringing with them as their great watchword the English vocable whose adventures and transformations abroad I have briefly recounted. The deeper meanings which had been added to the word *romantic* by German thinkers, and by the opposition they had elaborated between *romanticism* and *classicism*, were made current in England by the writings of Madame de Staël, and also no doubt by the talk of that inexhaustible conversationalist when she came to these shores in 1813.<sup>1</sup>

But before the date of Madame de Staël's English visit we find Jeffrey writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802 of that sect of poets "who boast much of their originality, and seem to value themselves very highly

<sup>1</sup> The abstract terms *Romanticism* and *Classicism* are not found in English with the meanings they had acquired abroad till a later date (*Romanticism* 1844, *Classicism* 1837). The problems involved took the form, in the concrete English way, of a discussion as to whether Pope could be called a poet, and an attempt to establish an antithesis between magical and evocative poetry, as opposed to a rhetorical and didactic verse.

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for having broken loose from the bondage of antient authority, and reasserted the independence of genius." Though this sect, which had been established in England, Jeffrey said, for ten or twelve years, laid claim to a creed and a revelation of its own, there could be little doubt that their doctrines were "of German origin, and had been derived from some of the great modern reformers of that country."<sup>1</sup>

This sect of poets was the School which afterwards was baptized, apparently by Jeffrey, as the "Lake School,"<sup>2</sup> and which in quite recent years we have come to group along with Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats as the Romantic Poets of the early nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It was to these poets, especially to Coleridge, that we owe our modern familiarity with the great watchwords of modern criticism as we now use, or misuse, them, *originality*, *creative*, *imagination*, and *genius*, as contrasted with *talent*,<sup>4</sup> etc., and from

<sup>1</sup> Review of Southey's *Thalaba*, Oct. 1802.

<sup>2</sup> The first instance of the appellation *Lake School* which the *Oxford Dictionary* cites is from an article of Jeffrey's in the *Edinburgh Review* of Aug. 1817.

<sup>3</sup> It would be interesting to discover when the English Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century were first all grouped together under this Anglo-Franco-German term. Writing in 1886, Alois Brandl remarked in his *Life of Coleridge* that the phrase "Lake School" was a name, but not a designation, and suggested that this group of poets, with the addition of Scott (but not the more "classical" Keats, Byron, and Shelley), should be called the English "Romantic School" (English translation, p. 222). I do not know when first the Lake Poets were grouped together with Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Scott as "Romantic Poets," but it must be fairly recent.

<sup>4</sup> Brandl, in his *Life of Coleridge*, says that Coleridge derived the distinction he made between Genius and Talent ("Talent was manufacture, Genius a gift, that no labour or study could supply," etc.) from his reading of Jean Paul Richter; and that also the famous distinction between Fancy and the

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Coleridge the terms were borrowed by Jeffrey and Hazlitt and the other critics of the time.

In more recent times the meanings of all these terms have been much enriched by the modern conception of the unconscious self. Although many psychologists would not now accept, without considerable qualifications, the earlier notion of the Unconscious as the abiding-place of genius, and the source of inspiration,

"higher and creative" faculty of Imagination was derived from the same source (Brandl, English translation, p. 316). However, this latter distinction had already been suggested by Dryden, who wrote, "the first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding of that thought" (Ker, vol. i. p. 15). The distinction, however, was not noticed by Dryden's contemporaries, nor did Dryden himself afterwards observe it. Addison explicitly stated in 1712 that he used *Fancy* and *Imagination* promiscuously (*Spectator*, No. 411). The distinction between the two was, however, elaborated by W. Duff in his *Essay on Original Genius* (1767)—a book that Coleridge must, I think, have read. "Wit & Humour," Duff writes, "are produced by the efforts of a *rambling* and *sportive* Fancy, the latter [Genius] proceeds from the copious effusions of a plastic Imagination" (p. 52). "A vigorous, extensive, and plastic Imagination is the principal qualification of the one [Genius], and a quick and lively Fancy the distinguishing characteristic of the other" (p. 58).

The distinction, also emphasized by Coleridge, between "mechanical" and "organic"—the products of Fancy and Talent being "mechanical," those of Imagination and Genius being "organic"—is also traced by Brandl to Coleridge's reading of Schlegel and Jean Paul Richter. It was Leibnitz who first suggested this distinction; its aesthetic application was worked out in Germany, although, as usual, we find it casually suggested in England in the eighteenth century, as when Young writes, "an *original* may be said to be of a vegetable nature," etc. (see *ante*, p. 27). Young uses the word *mechanic*, but not the word *organic*. The first appearance which I have found of *organic* with this meaning is in Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare* (delivered in 1810-11, and published in 1849), where he attributes the error of Voltaire's abuse of Shakespeare to "the confounding of mechanical regularity with organic form" (ed. 1865, p. 54).

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yet they would probably all agree that something analogous to the conscious processes of thought, which may go on beneath awareness, and reveal itself to it in a sudden uprush, probably plays an important, and possibly a dominant, role in what we call inspiration and the creative activity of genius. Although the exact nature of these processes is still a matter of dispute, yet the notion of subconscious thought, taken simply as an unexplained fact of experience, has helped in some degree to make more definite the meanings of the terms we have been discussing.<sup>1</sup> These meanings have been moreover enriched in another way—by the addition, namely, to aesthetic theory, and the facts it considers, of the non-representative arts of architecture and especially of music. It is curious to note, in the bewigged speculations of the eighteenth century, that music, which was the most living art of that time, and especially so in the German home of aesthetic speculation, is barely so much as mentioned. The slightest consideration of the form and content of music would have most effectually shattered the “imitation-of-nature” theory against which the Germans were in revolt; but in their search for something which transcended Nature, they turned, not to the musical creations of Mozart and Gluck and the other composers of the

<sup>1</sup> Of other additions to our vocabulary of criticism, perhaps the most important is the use of the old word *imaginative* with the meaning, as defined by the *O.E.D.*, of “characterized by, or resulting from, the productive Imagination; bearing evidence of high poetic or creative fancy.” The first quotation for this use given by the *O.E.D.* is from the introduction to Scott’s *Guy Mannering* in the edition of 1829. *Realism* as a term of art-criticism was used by Ruskin in 1856, *realistic* by Emerson in the same year, and *realist* by Swinburne in 1870.

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time, but to the supernatural world which they **found** in the writings of Shakespeare and Milton and **Dante**. When precisely the phenomena of music began to **exert** an influence on German aesthetic theory, I am not learned enough to say,<sup>1</sup> but certainly in English criticism of the time music was only referred to in the briefest and most casual manner.<sup>2</sup>

### V

My task has been so far merely the task of the archaeologist of words: I have simply attempted to trace the origins and transformations of a few of our commonest and most hackneyed terms of criticism. But one cannot go on repeating these old battle-cries in cold blood and with complete impunity: the fire still latent in them is contagious; they are ancestral voices which still prophesy of war. Since the aesthetic conflict is by no means ended, and its important issues are a long way from being yet decided, upon the lexicographer also descends the divine fury; the temptation to take up the cudgels and rush, if but for a moment, into the never-ending combat, requires more self-control than I at least can boast of. I must be allowed, therefore, to qualify my narrative with a certain liberty of criticism and comment; and as a preliminary step to joining the speculative war-dance, I shall take this opportunity to point out again how much the origins and adventures of the words we use influence their

<sup>1</sup> German critics have ascribed to Schiller the first real appreciation of the aesthetic significance of music.

<sup>2</sup> Shaftesbury refers to the harmony of music in his *Characteristicks* (Part III., 3), and Capell to the non-imitative arts. architecture and music, in his *Reflections on Originality* (1766).

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meaning, and how rich they are in overtones of half-conscious suggestion which confuse us, and which we can only half-comprehend, unless we know their history. That our word *romantic*, for instance, acquired its literary meaning, first of all from the contemptuous attitude of the Age of Reason towards the old romances, and afterwards from its use as an adjective for landscape, for wild and desolate views and ancient castles, seen through the medium of old poems and romances, helps us to understand why, when it was used anew as the name for a certain kind of literature, it came to imply the contemplation of Nature, not directly, but through a mist of associated ideas and literary memories, and thus suggested, and indeed still suggests, that element of subjectivity, of vague and reminiscential feeling, which has been generally regarded as a characteristic of romantic, as opposed to classical, literature. The foreign adventures, too, of the words we have been studying, the fact that they have been to the wars, and have become, as I have said, battle-cries in foreign countries, have also loaded them with propagandist doctrine, with revolutionary and explosive meanings, which are still potent in them. This is especially true, I think, of the great watchwords *Genius* and *Originality*; the *Genie-periode* in Germany, the Romantic Movements, both in Germany and France, were times of angry enthusiasm and of wild revolt; the ecstatic emphasis laid upon the freedom, the spontaneity, and the originality of the creative genius, the attribution to that genius of miraculous and daemonic powers, invested the cult of Genius and the worship of Originality with an exaggerated and mystical importance. The artists

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of earlier days had been regarded—and had regarded themselves—as craftsmen ; the new conception of the artist as a genius, as a creature of passion and fire, above the law, and the popular deification of this ideal, tended to produce the beings thus imagined and adored—the wild spirits of lawless lives and strange fits of passion,

And mighty Poets in their misery dead.

The emphasis, too, on originality, on the expression of the artist's unique personality, on the never-ceasing creation of something new and strange and never before heard of, has not only tended to inflame the vanity of the artist, but also to suggest standards of comparison and valuation in which the elements of novelty, of newness for its own sake, are somewhat unduly overprized. The work of a great artist always, or almost always, has in it an element of newness, and is always, or almost always (though without conscious purpose), coloured by his own personality. But these are surely more accidental than essential characteristics of his work ; for newness and the expression of unique personalities are of no great artistic importance in themselves. This is especially true in the arts which we call the fine arts, where technique and tradition are of prime importance ; and it would not perhaps be too fantastic to attribute, in part at least, the downfall of painting, architecture, and the handicrafts in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century—perhaps the greatest artistic disaster the world has ever suffered—to this modern enthusiasm for the originality of creative genius, and the desire on the part of every artist and architect and handicraftsman to display as conspicuously



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as possible his own personality and peculiar gifts. Ever since then the history of art has been the history of conscious and violent revolutions and reactions, instead of that gradual and unconscious modification of an inherited tradition which characterized its development in previous ages.

How far the antithesis, developed abroad, in our conceptions of classical and romantic art has been an advantage or disadvantage to criticism it would be difficult to say ; but most of us would agree, I think, that this antithesis has been greatly over-emphasized. The words *romanticism* and *classicism* are used like hatchets to chop us materials of the most delicate and subtle weaving and intertexture ; and indeed the variety of meanings attributed to them shows that they are employed without any precise and accepted understanding of what their signification really is. For what after all is romanticism as contrasted with classicism ? Is it, as Pater said, the addition of strangeness to beauty ; is it disease as opposed to health, as Goethe defined it ; or an appeal to the feelings as against an appeal to reason ; or as Schlegel said, the picturesque contrasted with the statuesque ; or self-abandonment versus self-control ; individualism as opposed to the ideals of organized society ; associated ideas and subjectivity as contrasted with objectivity and formal beauty ; the exotic, the bizarre, and the magical and mysterious moment, rather than the typical, the usual, the general ? Or shall we define it as suggestiveness, incompleteness, aspiration, and a preoccupation with the infinite, as opposed to definiteness, completeness, and precision of statement ?

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It is perhaps all these things ; but if this is so, there are both romantic and classical elements in almost every work of art ; and the exaggerated opposition between the two makes it necessary to distort the facts, if we are to place poems and plays and pictures each separately by itself in one or the other of these categories. The facts are really too complex to be summed up in any one formula ; and indeed, all the terms we have been discussing tend to distort and caricature the phenomena they attempt to account for ; it would have been better, perhaps, for English criticism if they had remained at home, and by half-conscious adjustments, adapted themselves, in the practical, empirical, muddle-headed English way, to the new facts of aesthetic appreciation as they spontaneously arose. However, we must take them as they come to our hands ; if they are ploughshares which have been beaten into swords, tools which have been made into battle-axes, they are tools nevertheless for which we have no substitutes, and we cannot, if we wish to write of the aesthetic problems which face us, do without them. These problems are of two kinds : there are those connected with the work of art itself, and those which are more intimately concerned with the artist who produces it. In every representative of Nature which is a work of art, there is to be found, as Prof. Courthope has said, something which is not to be found in the aspect of Nature which it represents ; and what that something is has been a matter of dispute from the earliest days of criticism. This is the aspect of the problem which has most interested the neo-classical critics ; those of what we call romantic tendencies have paid more attention to

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its subjective aspect,<sup>1</sup> the power of faculty in the artist which has enabled him to add this unknown something to his representation of Nature. What is it, they have asked, which differentiates the artistic imagination from the mere fancy, or from the imagination which produces dreams or the illusions of illness or of madness? If we call it the "plastic" or the "creative" imagination, we can then perhaps call its product a "creation," rather than a "finding" or "invention"; and the power of the creative artist we many designate as genius, as opposed to talent. Thus the artist himself becomes a genius, and we are fitted out with a makeshift vocabulary of terms for our critical discriminations. But these terms are, as we have seen, the product of much confused and over-excited thinking; and they denote rather than they define and explain the phenomena they describe. If, however, we are unable to use them scientifically, a knowledge of their history may perhaps, as I have suggested, help to put us on our guard against them when they patently distort the facts. If we keep in mind the revolutionary origin of our modern theory of genius, we may discount some of the more overwhelming reverberations of this portentous word, and more clearly perceive the element

<sup>1</sup> The emergence of the words *taste* and *aesthetic* are other indications of this subjective trend in criticism. The use of *taste* to describe a "special function of the mind" is generally attributed to the Spanish Jesuit Gracian (1601-58), and Addison ascribes the phrase "the fine taste" to him (see Spingarn, vol. i. p. xcii.). The first instance of its use in English is in the line, quoted by the O.E.D. from *Paradise Regained*, "Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling" (iv. 347). *Aesthetic* is an invention of a German critic of the eighteenth century, Baumgarten. It is first found in English in 1798 (O.E.D.).

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of truth which it certainly does express. Now there can be no doubt that the spontaneous, inspired daemonic genius—or at least, since it is more a matter of degree than of absolute distinction—that the genius who possesses more conspicuously than others this character, has existed in all the arts : El Greco in painting, Michael Angelo in sculpture, Wagner in music, are analogues of original poets like Shelley, Blake, or Walt Whitman ; but the emphasis laid upon the type of genius possessed by these great originators, and the depreciatory contrast with mere talent, has tended, I think, to make us forget that the daemonic genius is not the only kind of genius, and indeed not by any means always the greatest kind.

We tend to relegate the undaemonic artists to the category of talent ; and if the antithesis between genius and talent is, as no doubt it is, a useful one, it might be well to restore to our vocabulary the other and older antithesis between the “ natural ” and the “ learned ” genius. For there are poets and artists of the first rank who are endowed with no daemonic qualities. If Aeschylus was, as Dryden said, a great genius, and always “ tearing it upon the tripos,” we cannot deny the appellation of genius to Sophocles, who indulged in no such contortions. So in every age of art we find the same contrast. It would be absurd to refuse the name of genius to Milton or to Leopardi, and yet there were never more conscious authors ; and, to take another instance, Charlotte Brontë is regarded by her admirers as a more inspired genius than Jane Austen, but would they maintain that she is therefore a greater writer ? Is the inspired Blake a more

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important figure in English art than the laborious, learned, conscientious Sir Joshua Reynolds? One of the great defects of our critical vocabulary is the lack of a neutral, non-derogatory name for these great artificers, these artists who derive their inspiration more from the formal than the emotional aspects of their art, and who are more interested in the masterly control of their material, than in the expression of their own feelings, or the prophetic aspects of their calling.

For this kind of genius, and for the quality which distinguishes it, I should like to suggest an adjective and a noun which will at first certainly surprise, and perhaps shock, my readers, but which, both from their etymology and their earlier use, fit most exquisitely the meaning for which we so much need them. These are the words *erudite* and *erudition*, which are derived from *erudire* (*e*, "out of," and *rudis*, "rude," "rough," or "raw"), a verb meaning in classical Latin to bring out of the rough, to form by means of art, to polish, to instruct. *Eruditus* has in Latin the meaning of "accomplished," "skilled"; and in its earlier English use it kept its classical meaning. So also *erudition* was used for the process of training or instruction, "the erudition of young children"; and also for the instruction thus imparted, and for the state of being trained or instructed; and it was thus used by Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup> It was also used of the perfect workmanship

<sup>1</sup> "Fam'd be thy tutor, and thy parts of nature  
Thrice-fam'd, beyond all erudition"

(*Troilus and Cressida* II. iii. 256-7).

So also Sir Henry Wotton writes of Essex, "The Earl was of good Erudition, having been placed at Study in Cambridge very young" (quoted *O.E.D.*).

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or finish of a coin, Addison for instance writing that "the intrinsic value of an old coin does not consist in its metal but its erudition."<sup>1</sup>

If, then, we could restore *erudite* and *erudition* to their old meanings (they are now merely superfluous synonyms for "learned" and "learning"), we should have fitting appellations for our great artificers, and for that quality of conscious artistry, of acquired technical accomplishment, which cannot, when carried, as by Horace, to exquisite perfection, be called mere talent. A name for this noble kind of genius, which would explicate and make clear and emphasize its nature and its methods, would I think be of special advantage in two ways. It would, in the first place, recall attention to the imitable qualities in high artistic achievement; for the erudite genius, with his acquired mastery of his material, can be most profitably imitated; while, as Sir Joshua Reynolds pointed out, the imitation of the daemonic genius and his reliance on his inborn and untutored powers, is (save for other daemonic geniuses like himself) the worst possible precedent and example. Then also the fact that the daemonic genius is often a prophet as well, and is generally thought to have a mission (though what exactly were Shakespeare's or Keats's missions it might be difficult to say), has given rise to the notion that the true genius comes, like Wordsworth or Shelley or Browning or Walt Whitman, with a message for his age; and thus the genius who has no gospel, no scheme of salvation for the world, but

<sup>1</sup> Quoted *O.E.D.* So also the *O.E.D.* quotes from another writer, "the Merit both of Intaglio's and Cameo's depends on their Erudition, on the Goodness of the Workmanship, and on the Beauty of their Polish."

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simply a genius for pure art, suffers disparagement from others, and perhaps discouragement in himself.

It would perhaps be better for our criticism if we were to use the word *genius* to describe the gift and endowment, rather than the person thus gifted and endowed ; or even, as a critic has suggested,<sup>1</sup> for us to avoid using the term as far as possible, and to rehabilitate and restore the term *inspiration*. For inspiration, and the notion it suggests, is perhaps a better description than genius for the phenomena of artistic achievement. The word genius implies the permanent possession of magical power ; and all the works of a genius, being regarded as the products of this power, are accepted in a spirit of worship and without discrimination. Thus criticism is blurred, and the genius himself, believing in the unfailing potency of his gift, tends to work in a slovenly manner, and is tempted also to exaggerate and exploit the wonder-working personality to which are attributed such miraculous results. But artists even of the greatest genius are, as we all know, quite capable of producing work of the most deplorable and unblest description ; their genius is at best but an intermittent energy, and the greatest artist or poet is simply the artist or poet who is most subject to the visitation of what we call inspiration—who is more frequently and more powerfully inspired than other men. Shelley, who was perhaps as richly endowed with what we call genius as any poet who ever existed, has well described the coming and going of the inspiration upon which, as he tells us, the poet must depend.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, May 11, 1914, p. 9.

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“ Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, ‘ I will compose Poetry.’ The greatest poet even cannot say it ; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness ; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.” <sup>1</sup>

In the intervals of inspiration, the poet, Shelley adds, “ becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live.”

If our attention were more habitually directed to the visits of inspiration, rather than to the genius it visits, although a clear conception of what inspiration is might elude us, yet we could more accurately discriminate its traces, finding them not only in the works of the erudite as well as the daemonic genius, but also, now and then, in the productions of mere men of talent, to whom the name of genius, with its modern meaning, can hardly be applied.

The advance of modern psychology has, moreover, removed one difficulty which to the older critics was involved in the theory of inspiration. If poetry, they asked, was a product of inspiration, if it was something which was given from without, how could it be regarded as an art which required—as poetry obviously did require—labour, apprenticeship, preparation, study ? This difficulty is met for us by the modern theory of the unconscious, and all the real, if loosely defined, notions which are associated with that con-

<sup>1</sup> *A Defence of Poetry.*



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cept.<sup>1</sup> Inspiration, as we conceive it, does not come to us from without. It is not a gift of the stars or the Muses, but an impulse from sources that are inside ourselves. The Pierian Spring, the Fountain of Castalia, are still flowing, but their streams murmur deep within us ; and although our conscious intelligence has no direct control over these springs of power, yet by labour and study it can clarify and enrich them ; and can form standards and ideals which, long brooded over, may then sink down from the conscious into the unconscious strata of our mental existence, and mould and elaborate the unknown stores of energy which exist there, amorphous and concealed.

The modern cult of Genius, and the heated atmosphere of revolution that gave it birth, have also tended to over-emphasize and endow with exaggerated importance the word *originality*, and the quality it denotes in works of art. Originality has no doubt its importance, but that importance is more historical than purely aesthetic ; for not only in the absence of documents are we unable to say how much originality is possessed by the works of ancient writers like Homer or Lucretius or Catullus,<sup>2</sup> but also, when we do possess the docu-

<sup>1</sup> " There is in genius itself an unconscious activity ; nay, that is the genius in the man of genius." Coleridge, *Essay on Poesy in Art (Biographia Literaria)*, ed. Shawcross, vol. ii. p. 258). " Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power." Hazlitt, *The Indian Jugglers, Table Talk*, vol. i. p. 195. " The definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously ; and those who have produced immortal works, have done so without knowing how or why. The greatest power operates unseen." *Plain Speaker*, i. p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> How much " originality " we should find in the poem of Catullus, *ille mi par esse deo videtur*, did we not know that this poem was a direct translation from Sappho !

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ments, we often find that the greatest innovators in the arts, those who have done most to create new forms and utilize new material, are not by any means always those of the highest and most permanent achievement. Donne was a greater innovator than Shakespeare, and had a much more powerful influence upon the succeeding generation, but he was not a greater poet ; Caravaggio was one of the most original of Italian painters, and has been called the first modern artist, the inventor of realism, the begetter of Velasquez and Manet ; but his work has for us little pure artistic interest. Rossetti was a painter of immense originality, but of small artistic achievement ; Philipp Emanuel Bach, musicians tell us, was a greater originator, and had a much more powerful influence on the development of music, than his father John Sebastian ; while Jean-Jacques Rousseau is by no means the greatest writer of that world of modern thought and feeling which he did more than any one to discover and create. The sense of original discovery, of turning up new soil, is more of value as an incentive and encouragement to the artist, than as an approved ingredient in, or characteristic of, his work.

Besides the word *inspiration*, there is another rather old-fashioned term which we might do well to furbish up and restore to our critical vocabulary. This is the painter's term *invention*, which describes a quality of real, if subordinate, importance, not only in painting but in literature as well. Johnson declared that the highest praise of poetry was invention, "such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights." <sup>1</sup> It was by invention, he said, that "new

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Waller.*

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trains of events are formed, and new scenes of imagery displayed" ;<sup>1</sup> and this power not only of inventing new scenes and incidents and displaying new images, but also of contriving new moulds and shapes, metrical and other, for the purposes of new expression—this gift of invention, which Keats called "the Polar Star of Poetry,"<sup>2</sup> has been somewhat overshadowed and eclipsed by the use of the portentous word *creation*, with which I shall conclude my remarks. The words *create*, *creation*, *creator*, *creative*, have become so vulgarized, and are so indiscriminately used—even in fashion-papers we read of "creations" in millinery—that careful writers try to avoid them, although they find that they cannot banish them altogether from their vocabulary. For the conception they embody is, of all the ideas expressed by the watchwords we have been studying, in fact the primary one ; it lies at the root of all the rest, and is the origin and source of the great change in our modern theory of aesthetics. The word *invention* was a word of compromise, an attempt to reconcile, by the idea of original copying, the old imitation-theory with the notorious need for something more than the repetition of the same effects in art. As this imitation-theory gradually broke down, the notion of invention began to be replaced by that of creation—the creation, in the first place, of "fairy worlds" by Shakespeare and Milton, but especially by Shakespeare. This conception was then enlarged to include the creation in drama and fiction of living characters, and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Pope*.

<sup>2</sup> "A long poem is a test of invention, which I take to be the Polar Star of Poetry, as Fancy is the Sails and Imagination the rudder." *Letter to Bailey*, Oct. 8, 1817.

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afterwards with the inclusion of music, to that of whole new and spontaneous worlds of feeling and relation, which have little or no correspondence with the given world of fact.

This idea, like the other ideas we have been studying, was immensely emphasized in the romantic revolts of Germany and France : to sanctify and deify art as the second creator was, Theophile Gautier tells us, one of the ideals of the French Romantics, and he quotes the famous lines :

Dans la création d'un bonheur sans mélange  
Etre plus artiste que Dieu !<sup>1</sup>

This reverent and religious, or, as others thought it, irreligious, conception of the divine power of the artistic creator returned across the Channel, and is often found in the works of Coleridge, as when, for instance, he describes the imagination of the artist as an echo of what he calls the primary imagination, which is itself an analogue of creation, and its activity "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."<sup>2</sup> In other writers of this period, in Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley and Hazlitt, we find an almost equal glorification of the poet's creative faculty, the notion that the artist, and above all the poet, has the power of creating a new heaven and a new earth, a world more real perhaps than the actual one, a universe of the mind, concrete, autonomous, independent, and peopled by living beings, created before they are represented—as Coleridge said

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Romantisme*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Biog. Lit.*, chap. xiii.

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of Shakespeare's characters—out of the depths of the poet's own mind, and, in Shelley's words,

Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality.

There is something mystical in this doctrine, this faith, as of Keats, that "what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—whether it existed before or not." And yet the notion that art is creative, that, in Pater's words, it "adds a new presence to the world," or as Wordsworth puts it, "Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe . . . an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet," is a notion which deeply permeates all our criticism ; and what we have come to value most in art is not the imitation of Nature, but the unprecedented and undreamed of harmonies it creates, the surprise and strangeness of those authentic and yet unforeseeable visions—those worlds of beauty and truth and wonder—which it opens to the imagination.

Even in a phrase like :

Tiger ! Tiger ! burning bright  
In the forests of the Night,

we seem to recognize the character of something inevitable, something that has a veracity of its own, that must exist, and has always existed, and from which we cannot withhold the name of reality.

And as often happens in the history of thought, our notion of this mystery of artistic creation has been made somewhat clearer by the method of antithesis. Just as romanticism has been more clearly defined by its opposition to classicism, genius by the contrast with

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talent, and imagination by that of fancy, so the notion of creation has been sometimes contrasted with that of invention, as when for instance a recent critic wrote that "Shakespeare of all men seems to have been in comparison with his strength in Creation, the weakest in Invention."<sup>1</sup>

### VI

In their human and most happy manner the ancient Greeks embodied in appropriate symbols their awareness of aesthetic facts and of the experience of the poet. These symbols of Apollo, the lyre of the God, and the piercing song of the Muses, their haunts on Helicon and Parnassus, their sacred springs of Hippocrene and Castalia ; the visits of these Immortals to the mortals who invoke them, and the divine fury and enthusiasm they inspire, have lived on in our literature, not only as hallowed and beautiful ornaments, but as true, though symbolic, expressions of the circumstances which give rise to poetry, and of the nature of the poet's sensibilities and gifts. To this inherited vocabulary the Romantic Movement has added, partly from biblical sources, the terms which have been occupying our attention. The whole body of these words, ancient and modern, represents and expresses the aesthetic experience of the human spirit ; an experience which, though very real and profound, has been as yet very partially clarified into speculative theory. But these words have come to be so indiscriminately employed, and are now so blurred in outline, that there is a great

<sup>1</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, Sept. 20, 1917.

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need to make definite, and *préciser*—or why not say in purer English “to precise”—their meanings ; to bring into more clear-cut relief the phenomena they designate ; and by means of a nicer and more accurate use of this inherited vocabulary, to discriminate for instance in works of art their originality, their romantic or their classical ingredients ; or, in the endowments of the artist who produces them, their gifts of talent and erudition, or of unconscious and daemonic genius. And if, becoming aware of other qualities for which we have no names, we may be tempted to suggest new appellations, we would do well to follow, in this matter, the tradition of our older nomenclature, and be content, for the most part, like our predecessors, with designating or merely descriptive words. There is a tendency in the human mind to be impatient of anything it cannot understand, and to deny, if possible, the existence of phenomena for which it can find no explanation. Thus, as we have seen, the neo-classical critics denied the existence of inspiration, and the more mysterious powers of the imagination. This tendency leads men of science to prefer analytic and explanatory terms ; but in matters like the phenomena of æsthetics, names which may suggest over-hasty explanations tend to falsify and distort the things they designate, and become premature and petrified definitions, which cannot readily grow and deepen with the growth and deepening of our knowledge. A chance appellation like *romantic*, for instance, or a metaphor like *inspiration*, are much more convenient names than a term like Coleridge’s “esemplastic power” for the imagination, which attempts to explain its working.

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The truth is that the phenomena of artistic production are still so obscure, so baffling, we are still so far from an accurate scientific and psychological knowledge of their genesis or meaning, that we are forced to accept them as empirical facts ; and empirical and non-explanatory names are the names that suit them best. The complete explanation of any fact is the very last step in human thought ; and it is reached, as I have said, if indeed it is ever reached, by the preliminary processes of recognition, designation, and definition. It is with these preliminary processes that our aesthetic criticism is still occupied. We have recognized, and we have named, the mysterious creative power of the imagination, the genius of the poet or artist who possesses it, and the inspiration by which he is himself possessed. But what, stated in terms of scientific psychology, these powers really are, and what are the conditions which favour or impede their activity, though they are problems whose solution is of the utmost importance for civilization, they are problems nevertheless about which we are still almost completely in the dark. Perhaps the most profitable thing we can do at present is, leaving their ultimate analysis in suspense, to discriminate their manifestations in the immense wealth of concrete examples to which our attention is being now so multifariously directed. The more adequate solution of these problems is a task which will no doubt profoundly concern the critics, the psychologists, and even the sociologists and metaphysicians of the future ; it is not, however, a task which can rightly be imposed upon the lexicographer, whose peaceful role I now resume, and in which role



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I will complete my essay by a few relevant quotations from some of our contemporary writers who have touched upon these problems. Thus Mr. A. C. Bradley says of poetry, "Its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous." And again, of life and poetry, he says, "the two may be called different forms of the same thing ; one of them having (in the usual sense) reality, but seldom fully satisfying imagination ; while the other offers something which satisfies imagination, but has not full ' reality '." <sup>1</sup>

In writing of Byron, Dr. Herford says :

"Byron lacks supreme imagination. With boundless resources of invention, rhetoric, passion, wit, fancy, he has not the quality which creates out of sensation, or thought, or language, or all together, an action, a vision, an image, or a phrase, which, penetrated with the poet's individuality, has the air of a discovery, not an invention, and no sooner exists than it seems to have always existed. A creator in the highest sense Byron is not." <sup>2</sup>

In the writings of the least romantic of modern critics, Mr. Santayana, we can perhaps find the most rational statement of this modern theory of artistic creation.

"A spontaneous creation of the mind can be more striking and living than any reality, or any abstraction from realities. The artist can invent a form which, by its adaptation to the imagination, lodges there, and

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, p. 236.

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becomes a point of reference for all observations, and a standard of naturalness and beauty. . . . This method of originating types is what we ordinarily describe as artistic creation. The name indicates the suddenness, originality, and individuality of the conception thus attained.”<sup>1</sup>

In another place Mr. Santayana says of the higher arts :

“ When the world is shattered to bits they can come and ‘ build it nearer to the heart’s desire.’ The great function of poetry . . . is precisely this : to repair to the material of experience, seizing hold of the reality of sensation and fancy beneath the surface of conventional ideas, and then out of that living but indefinite material to build new structures, richer, finer, fitter to the primary tendencies of our nature, truer to the ultimate possibilities of the soul.”<sup>2</sup>

I will end with a relevant quotation from a living poet :

For beauty being the best of all we know  
Sums up the unsearchable and secret aims  
Of nature, and on joys whose earthly names  
Were never told can form and sense bestow ;  
And man hath sped his instinct to outgo  
The step of science ; and against her shames  
Imagination stakes out heavenly claims,  
Building a tower above the head of woe.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry and Religion*, pp. 269-70.

<sup>3</sup> *The Poetical Works of Robert Bridges* (1912), p. 191.

## CHAPTER IV

### POPULAR SPEECH AND STANDARD ENGLISH

#### I

WE are all of us aware that outside the borders of what is called "good English," the standard language, spoken and written by the educated classes, there are other forms of speech in existence all about us—there are the special jargons of various trades and sports and occupations ; there are the rich vocabularies of slang, of imprecation, and of ribaldry—all full of vitality and interest ; and then there are the local dialects which are still to be found in almost all parts of England and Scotland. Exact and precise definitions and classifications of all these various forms of popular speech are hardly possible, so mixed are they, and so imperceptibly do they shade one into another ; they may, however, be all grouped together, in contrast to the standard language, under the name of popular speech, the essential difference being that they are all spoken, but not written vernaculars ; that they live and change and develop, or deteriorate, free from the conditions and the restrictions which are imposed, and necessarily imposed, upon any form of speech which has become a written language, and which, with its received

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vocabulary and its obligatory grammar, is taught in schools, and written and spoken by all educated people. The formation of our standard English, its growth in the course of centuries, is described in every history of our language, and we are now witnessing its immense extension—the way in which, by means of quickened social intercourse, by popular education and the press, it is spreading its domain ever more widely. The influence of standard English on popular speech is easy to observe ; but the reverse action, the influence upon the standard language of those forms of unschooled and unwritten speech which have always existed, and still exist, outside its borders, is a subject which has attracted less attention, although it is by no means without its interest and importance.

Of all the various forms of non-literary English, the local dialects have been most carefully documented and studied ; glossaries of all, and grammars of some of them, have been published, and the material in these has been put together, with that collected by the Dialect Society, in six volumes of Dr. Wright's immense *Dialect Dictionary*, which is not only one of the greatest lexicographical achievements ever performed by one scholar, but a work for the lover of words of inexhaustible fascination, enabling him, as it does, to explore at ease the wild regions of English which lie around the streets and suburbs of our polite vernacular.

## II

There is much in the study of dialect of scientific importance to the linguistic student, and much too

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of more general interest which is not without relevance to the subject of this essay. One of the first things that the lover of literature notices in the English dialects is the number of ancient terms which are still preserved in them, although they have become obsolete in our standard language. It is well known, of course, that a large part of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, driven from the court and the hall by French invaders at the Norman Conquest, has taken refuge in humble cottages, and still preserves a vigorous life in village speech. A list of these old Saxon words, unknown to modern literature, but still spoken by the uneducated classes, would fill many pages; their interest is, perhaps, more linguistic than literary, but it is worth noting that some of these humble terms are among the most highly descended words in our language, and go back, not only to the Teutonic past which we share with our German cousins, but even to the remotest Aryan antiquity. "Mickle," for instance, is a cousin of the Greek *μεγάλος*; the Yorkshire verb to *frayne*, meaning "to ask," is related to the Latin *precari*, the Northern *thole* to the Latin *tollere*; and when our gardeners speak of *healing* plants, they are using a word which, in its Latin and Greek forms, is to be found in the works of Virgil and Pindar and Aeschylus. But the fashionable French invaders which drove these old words from our standard speech have, many of them, suffered the same fate in the course of time—they, too, have fallen from the castle, and are now only to be found in the cottage and the village street. Many of these old English and French words are not understood by educated people, or only known to them from

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the glossaries of old poets ; but we find among them a large number of literary and archaic words which are, perhaps, still used in writing, although they have perished from our spoken conversation.

Our standard language is always suffering a kind of impoverishment which is somewhat mysterious in its causes and perhaps impossible to prevent. There is a sort of blight which attacks many of our most ancient, beautiful, and expressive words, rendering them first of all unsuitable for colloquial speech, though they may be still used in prose. Next they are driven out of the prose vocabulary into that of poetry, and are at last removed into that limbo of archaisms and affectations to which so many splendid words of our language have been unhappily banished. It is not that these words lose their lustre, as many words lose it, by hackneyed use and common handling ; the process is rather the opposite ; by not being used enough, the phosphorescence of decay seems to attack them, and give them a kind of shimmer which makes them seem too fine for common occasions. The fate of many beautiful old words like *teen* and *rathe* has thus been decided ; they are probably now lost to the language, and can never be restored. Others like *tryst* and *lea* and *fain* and *sooth* and *dight* and *fell* and *blithe*, belong to our poetic vocabulary ; words like *woe* and *rue* and *foe* and *fleet* and *chide* and *slay* and *mar* and *weep*, still are used in prose, but are seldom or never spoken ; while there are certain other tainted words which still linger on in our speech with metaphorical, though no longer with their literal meanings ; we can still talk of *delving* into our minds, or *dwelling* in thought,

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but we would never speak of *delving* in the garden or *dwelling* in England ; we *shun* a thought, but not a bore, we can designate a punishment as *swift*, but not a bird, or an airplane, or a steamer ; and we will call people *swine* or *hounds*, although we seldom use these words for the animals they more properly designate. And yet all, or almost all, these beautiful old words are still in literal use in various parts of the country ; the other poetic words I have mentioned are still spoken ; and the delight of meeting them, not as dim ghosts in books, but as vocables of living speech, of hearing in the familiar talk of workmen and of cottagers obsolete terms that King Alfred used, and Chaucer made famous, is not the least of the many surprises which will reward anyone who will listen to dialect speech. Why we cannot use them, the nature of the taboo which keeps our lips from speaking words which our uneducated neighbours can freely utter, is, as I have said, a mystery,<sup>1</sup> but the fact remains that with the best will in the world we cannot speak of *biding* in the house, or *slaying* pheasants ; indeed, anyone who might make the attempt would be likely to share the embarrassment of the would-be sportswoman, who exclaimed in the hunting-field, "What a beautiful leap !" and found it as well to leave the neighbourhood soon afterwards.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robert Bridges, in his S.P.E. Tract *On English Homophones* (pp. 24-26), has pointed out that some of these obsolete or obsolescent words, like *mead*, *dole*, etc., are homophonic, that is to say, that they possess two or more meanings ; and he suggests that this ambiguity has been the cause of their decay. But this explanation accounts for the death of only a small proportion of our dead or dying words—the greater number of them were never homophones, and have possessed but one meaning, and yet, as Horace noted long ago, they perish like the leaves of the forest.

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Can these lost treasures be recovered—is it possible to revive these dying words and restore them to our colloquial speech? Many of them which had become so obsolete in the eighteenth century that they had to be explained in glossaries, when poets like Chaucer and Spenser were reprinted in that period, were revived as literary terms during the Romantic Movement, and, when we see them in books, they are familiar to us all. But we seldom, if ever, hear them spoken, they remain in the limbo of poetic words, and never reach our lips. Occasionally, however, a word of this kind will return to the standard language, not as a literary revival, but from some form of popular speech where it is still spoken; and then we too can speak it, and its position is much more natural and assured. The word *brand* for instance is a poetic term which we might write, but would never utter for a burning log, or a mark of fire; its use however by workmen for the process of “branding” casks, enables us to speak of a “brand” of goods. *Car* is another word which has been restored in much the same manner; for this important and historic word, which was borrowed into late Latin from the Celts, and which came through Norman-French into the English language, had become by the eighteenth century a poetical term for some splendid and imaginary vehicle, the Car of Night, or the Car of Phaeton, and seems to have fallen out of the standard spoken speech. It was, however, preserved for homelier uses in certain districts, for the jaunting car in Ireland, and for the “car” or farm-cart in Scotland and Devonshire; and being adopted in America for the “horse-car” and the railway car, and for the tram-car



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in England, it has now, from its use for motor cars, become one of our most current words, happily replacing the cumbrous term *automobile*.

### III

But it is not only on account of the old words preserved in them that dialects are of interest. Being forms of speech which have developed in natural freedom, we can observe in them the untrammelled working of those processes by which our speech is being continually enriched. In writing of English sea-terms in a former chapter, I have already spoken of that assimilative power, thanks to which our language, in spite of its polyglot sources, has preserved its integrity of character and sound. Owing to this reactive energy of popular speech, this instinctive and healthy demand for homely sounds in spoken words, terms of alien character are not current long in popular speech before they take on a native shape. Alien sounds are often too replaced by syllables which are already familiar; thus *lumbago* has been transformed into *rumbago*, *bronchitis* into *brownkitus*, or *browncrisis*, and rheumatics into the expressive word *screwomatics*. These popular assimilations are called "corruptions," but we must remember that to this happy ignorance and philological unscrupulousness of unlettered people, we already owe a number of useful and pretty words like *mushroom*, *loosestrife*, *rosemary*, and *pennyroyal*. It may be in the future, when the history and the analogies of the English language are better understood, that these popular transformations

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will be regarded with more kindly eyes, and that we will no longer banish from our speech words like *sparrowgrass* and *cucumber* (which were once good English), and will welcome into that disgraceful department of our vocabulary—our names of garden-flowers—words like *rosydendron*, *polyam* for polyanthus, and *peremedoll* for *campanula pyramidalis*. And when we have a new foreign term like *char-à-banc* to assimilate, would it be a misfortune if, as Mr. de la Mare has suggested, popular etymology should transform it into the pretty form of *cherrybang*?

Besides assimilation, other processes which have made our language what it is, can also be seen at work in the speech of the uneducated classes. We all know of course how many of our words have changed their meanings in the course of history, and how in spite of the protests of all the purists, these changes are still going on in our standard language. But in the dialects these shifts of meaning are still more frequent and surprising. This is especially true of such learned words as find their way into the popular vocabulary. Uneducated people have a romantic fondness for “dixonaries” “jaw-breakers,” or “cramp-words,” as they are called, and show considerable originality in the uses to which they put them. Thus *moniment* has come to mean a fool in Scotland, *pedigree* a long story or rigmarole in Yorkshire; *miraculous* has changed its meaning to “very drunk,” *stagnate* to “astonish,” and *spiritual* to “angry.” Not many words of Greek origin are found in popular speech (though curiously enough the modern borrowing *nous* appears in almost all dialects), but those which are adopted undergo

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strange transformations, both in form and in signification. Thus *logaram* and *logic* have both acquired the meaning of "balderdash," *jometry* that of magic ; a *hypocrite* or *hipocrip* signifies merely an invalid in some places ; *tyrant* in other districts means "capable," as in the phrase, "a tyrant maid of all work" ; *fantome* or *fantomy* has become a common adjective for a poor crop of corn ; *catastrophes* is a name in Scotland for pieces of broken china, and the word *comical* has acquired in different dialects such diverse meanings as "bad-tempered," "impertinent," "dangerous," or "ill."

Words which are emphatic, and express feelings of wonder, admiration and surprise, are especially liable to change their meaning. Strong feelings not only need strong words, but they need new ones, when the strength of the old ones which have been employed is exhausted, and our colloquial terms *awful*, *ripping*, *stunning*, etc., show how persistent is this need. In emphatic terms of this kind the dialects are extremely rich ; the weather may be *audacious* cold in Sussex, or *lamentable* or *heinous* fine in other districts ; and from various dialects have been collected many odd intensives—*fell* or *furious* fond, *mud* or *raving* or *black fat*, *shocking* or *desperate* quiet, *miserable* or *odious* good ; a *fierce* (*i.e.* a lively) baby, a *perfumed liar*, or a *serious* place for ducks.

## IV

But there are still other linguistic processes, besides those of assimilation and change of meaning, which can be studied in dialect speech in their free and untrammelled

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working. Of these the most important are the processes by which new words are created. Popular speech contains thousands of words which find no place in our standard dictionaries. Many of these are of course local, but there are many which are spoken in all districts, although the educated classes have no acquaintance with them. Some of these are, as we have seen, ancient survivals, but the greater number are apparently new formations. The popular vernaculars are vast speech-jungles, in which old forms are decaying and new ones continually springing into life ; and this fermentation results in the creation of numberless new terms, which come to birth and live and die in tropical profusion. They are formed in living response to the needs of the moment ; the greater number of them hardly survive the occasion that brought them forth ; but others, on account of their expressive power and their usefulness, establish themselves, spread from district to district, and help to form that vocabulary of rustic speech which forms so vivid a mirror of the popular mind and its principal concerns and preoccupations. Here we find, as we might expect, a great wealth of agricultural terms—words for the various processes of cultivation, in all their nicest details, and words also for all the varieties of our variable weather, the winds, the rains, the frosts and thaws which help or hinder the labourer in his toils. Here we find also a rich vocabulary of reproof and vituperation for those human failings which are most obnoxious to plain and hard-working people, for laziness and lounging, for fine dressing and pretence and idle talk ; and their collections of half humorous, half indignant names

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for louts and slovens form one of the main features of our Doric vocabularies. Many of these popular words are too frank for polite usage, but this is by no means their general character. Our dialects are often rich in words expressive of nice observation—words which are superior to those of our standard speech in freshness and vividness, and which also often describe acts and objects and feelings for which we possess no names.<sup>1</sup>

What is the linguistic shape of these words, and by what processes are they formed? Many are compound words; for dialect speech, like the speech of sailors, has preserved that power of making compound words out of English elements which has become more or less atrophied in our literary language; and every now and then words of this kind, like *makeweight*, *shortcoming*, *output*, and the recent miner's term, *bedrock*, make their way from popular speech into the standard language. The useful compound *week-end*, originally a local term in the north and east of England, is one of the more recent of these additions.<sup>2</sup> But by far the greater number of

<sup>1</sup> To *munge*, for instance, meaning to eat in secret, to *pomster*, to treat oneself with quack remedies, the *evening* of stones and walls when moisture collects on them with a change of weather, the *dirling* of one's elbow when one knocks it suddenly, the *smeech* of a smoky lamp, the *gushels*, or little dams made by children, or the *dilly-castles* they build against the tide. I like, too, the Dorsetshire word *chickmetoad* for a traction-engine or steam-roller; it is a happy invention, and would be a useful addition to our motoring vocabulary.

<sup>2</sup> Many of these compounds are the native equivalents for the Latin or Greek words in our standard vocabulary—a *make-sleepy*, for instance, for a soporific, *moody-hearted* for melancholy, a *dish-down* for a disappointment, and *day-lived* for ephemeral. Other compounds are a *moon-belief*, a *natural-hearted* soil, the *sunway* or *moonway* on the waters, and *weather-gleam* for a clearing in the sky near a dark horizon.

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new words of popular formation are not made of old material, but are new roots, fresh formations made out of expressive sounds, and products of the true onomatopoeic faculty. The publication of the *Oxford Dictionary* has brought to light the fact that our language during the whole course of its history has been continuously enriched by "echo" words like *hoot* and *chatter*, *bounce* and *bump*, *hurry* and *hubbub*, *thud* and *thump* and *smash*, and by humorous formations like *cantankerous*, *pernickety*, *rollicking*, *flabbergast*, *higgledy-piggledy*, and *harum-scarum*, and hundreds of others of the same kind. Many of these have been traced to dialect sources ; the origin of the others remains obscure, but there can be little doubt that, if we knew more about them, we should find that they too are products of unschooled English, which abounds in expressive words of this character.

There is yet another way in which popular speech makes use of the elements of sound in our language. The material of any language consists of course in those combinations of vowels and consonants which seem natural and easy to its speakers, and the words which are most easily pronounced are formed out of the simplest and shortest combinations of these sounds. Monosyllabic words abound in English, and do much to give our language its energetic character ; and yet when we examine their employment, we find that it is, from an ideal standpoint, somewhat wasteful and capricious. A very large number of our monosyllables are made to bear the weight of many meanings ; sounds like *right*, *rain*, *rail*, *tick*, *list*, and many others have from three to five significations, which as Mr.

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Robert Bridges has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> seriously hampers their usefulness as means of expression, while hundreds of other simple vocables, like *clite*, *pite*, *hain*, *nain*, *thale*, *plick*, *bist*, *thist*, lie idle, like bits of unstamped metal, in the treasury of our speech. But we have only to open the *Dialect Dictionary* to see what a vast number of monosyllabic sounds like *belk*, *belve*, *bield*, *birl*, and hundreds of others have been made use of and given meanings. Many of these indeed have made their way into our standard speech ; *fad*, *fun*, *fog*, *nag*, *pet*, *hub*, *blight*, *beach*, *bleak*, *freak*, *shunt*, *skid*, *swamp* and *thud* are probably all words of popular origin, and at least four monosyllables from English dialects—the words *coke*, *tram*, *lunch* and *snob*, have proved of such value, that they have made their way into foreign vocabularies as well, and are now current almost all over the continent of Europe. The success of these penny pieces of popular speech may perhaps point the way to their more liberal use in the future ; if the principles of nomenclature ever come to be better understood, it will be seen, I think, that a simple, monosyllabic, designatory word like *gas*, which can easily form derivatives and enter into combinations, is preferable as a tool of thought to the long, difficult and learned explanatory terms which men of science are so fond of forming out of Greek and Latin elements.

## V

Words of the kinds I have been describing, obsolete terms and compounds, assimilations, echo words,

<sup>1</sup> *On English Homophones*, S.P.E. Tract, No. II., 1919.

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monosyllables and words with changed meanings, are continually finding their way from dialects and popular speech into the literary language, drifting like air-borne seeds over the barriers and walls which guard its precincts, and by their freshness and energy they do much to maintain our standard speech in health and vigour. Writers on the subject of language often speak of "dialectic regeneration," the enrichment of the standard language by popular words; but their methods of entrance, the various ways by which this enrichment takes place, have never been studied in detail. As, however, they are processes which we not only can see going on every day about us, but in which we all of us unconsciously play our part, it will be of interest to give a little consideration to them.

The most easily-opened door through which words find their way from dialect to standard speech is by means of some special trade or occupation; but this is so obvious and familiar to us, that it is not necessary to say much about it. We all know that when a business becomes of national importance its terms come to be generally familiar; thus the workmen from the North who built the first railways added to our vocabulary, and indeed to the vocabularies of Europe, dialect words like *shunt*, *bogie*, *trolley*, and *tram*; miners have provided us with terms like *coke* and *nugget*, and *blight* and *clover* have come from the gardeners and farmers of various districts. Local sports, too, when they become widely popular, also add, in much the same manner, local terms to our vocabulary; thus *lasher* is a word picked up by rowing-men in the Thames valley; *skid* and *hub* owe their popularity to



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bicycling ; *rink* is a Scottish word, and also from Scotland has come that wealth of golfing terms which have recently been added to the language.

But there are other ways, more important, but more difficult to trace, by which dialect words make their way into the different varieties of standard English. For our accepted language, the English familiar to the educated classes, is not absolutely uniform, but is made up of several forms of speech which vary somewhat in their vocabulary and grammar, and which are used on different occasions, according to their dignity and importance. Most familiar of all is the language of colloquial talk, with its expletives, easy idioms, and a varying amount of slang. Above this is the vernacular of good conversation, more correct, more dignified, and entirely, or almost entirely, free from slang. Above this comes the written language, which is richer in vocabulary and somewhat more old-fashioned in construction than the standard spoken speech. But this written, like the spoken language, is also of two kinds—for the English of poetry differs from that of prose, both in grammar and vocabulary. We have, therefore, at least four varieties of English, each with its set of special terms. Now, if we examine this linguistic ladder or staircase reaching from earth to the heights of poetry, we shall find that its lowest rung or step is fixed close to the soil of popular and vulgar speech. For our slangy and colloquial terms are almost always of popular origin ; and among these are to be found a large number of words from dialects. These words find an easy entrance into the vocabulary of familiar talk ; sportsmen pick them up from grooms

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and gamekeepers, children learn them from servants, masters from their workmen ; they drift from stables and gardens into drawing-rooms ; and wherever the educated and the uneducated meet and talk together on easy terms, new words, fresh from the popular speech are added to the vocabulary of the educated classes. These words, whether they originate in cant, slang, or in dialect, are at first regarded as vulgarisms, and shock the nice ears of the polite. But they soon undergo a sifting process. Slang words, being generally created, not to define a thing, but to say something funny about it, keep as a rule their slangy character ; while those among the dialect terms which are genuine and useful definitions lose little by little their vulgar associations, and, once firmly fixed on the lower steps of the linguistic ladder, push themselves upward, one rung after another. They are used in talk, then in familiar letters, then in easy prose, and some of them at least make their way into the vocabulary of the highest poetry. The character and value of these words shift, therefore, almost from day to day ; and yet we all know at any given moment the class to which any of them belongs. We should all, for instance, agree that the words *beach*, *billow*, *swamp* and *dwindle* could be used in any appropriate context ; and that *gambler*, which Dr. Johnson described as a "cant" term, has its place in literary English. These are all believed to be words of dialect origin, which have come in the course of time to be generally accepted. Next below them is a class of dialect words which have only so far reached the stage of "good colloquial" English—words which anyone might use in talk, but

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which would seem out of place in the most dignified writing. Among words of this class may be mentioned *fun*, *clever*, *cantankerous*, *fad*, *bother*, *fogy*, *stingy*, and the verbs to *dawdle* and to *nag*. Of these nine words Dr. Johnson only includes three in his Dictionary ; *clever*, which he calls a " low word," and *fun* and *stingy*, which he condemns even more strongly as " low cant." *Clever*, *fun*, *stingy*—no one would now consider these words " low," and their advance since the time of Dr. Johnson is a striking proof of his own remark that " no word is naturally or intrinsically meaner than another ; our opinion therefore of words, as of other things arbitrarily and capriciously established, depends wholly upon accident and custom."

Next to these " good colloquial " words comes another class of dialect expressions, which are at present on a lower rung of the linguistic ladder, and have not yet lost their slangy associations—words like *lollipop*, *cantrip*, *dotty*, and the verbs to *potter*, to *flabbergast*, to *take a scunner*. These words, though still " low," are sometimes used in colloquial talk, and will not shock the polite, in the manner of the next class (for which I must beg them to brace their nerves)—words recently adopted into the slang vocabulary, like *codger*, *geezzer*, *piffle*, *gab*, *swank*, and the verbs to *cop*, to *bash*, to *flummox*, and to *diddle*. These are undoubtedly " low " at present, but their lowness is merely a matter of association ; between them and the others there is no essential difference, and some of them are probably of a nobler descent than many respectable words, well received in the best society. *Diddle*, for instance, is perhaps a survival from Anglo-Saxon times ; to *cop*

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has been traced through old French to the Latin *capere*; *geezzer*, a recent word of the music-halls, is a dialect variant of the pretty old name, *guiser*, for a masquerader.

The process of ascent in all these cases, the rise of vulgar words into good society, is as interesting to watch as the adventures of those social strugglers, whose fortunes are the theme of many novels. And while these words of rustic origin are advancing upwards, they pass others on the way, which are slowly descending the linguistic staircase; words like *pate*, *cocksure*, *huggermugger*, and (speaking with all respect) the word *guts*, which was once in dignified use, and was employed by Sir Philip Sidney when he sang of his soul and his "guts" in his translation of the Psalms. Among other tragic downfalls from high to the lowest place, the unfortunate and familiar adjectives *blooming* and *bloody* are deserving of a sympathetic mention.

But the process of ascent is not always the slow and tedious one which we have described. Certain dialect words there are which, owing to the patronage of some illustrious person, have been received at once on their merits, and almost without question. These patrons are famous writers of provincial origin, who add to the literary language words from the dialects of the districts where they have spent their early years. Spenser, it is well known, made use of words from Lancashire and the North, but it does not seem that his dialect introductions found much favour with his contemporaries. Scottish writers have been more fortunate, and have introduced many Northern words into Southern speech—not only words of literary

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formation (for Scotch was for some centuries a standard and literary language), but popular words as well, like *lilt*, and *outcome* which we owe to Carlyle, and *croon*, *eerie*, *flunkey*, and *gloaming*, with which Burns' poems have made us familiar. But by far the greatest trafficker in this kind of merchandise was Sir Walter Scott, who was endowed with a keen sense of the value of words, and who has done more to enrich our language with picturesque terms than any other modern writer. Not only did he revive and give a new lease of literary life to many beautiful words which he found in books, but he gathered them even more abundantly from living and local speech. He had always a sovereign or two ready in his pocket to give any wayfarer he met, or any humble acquaintance with whom he talked, in return for a good word or phrase which was new to him ;<sup>1</sup> and these he would introduce into his poems or novels, for the most part in the dialogue ; and thus a whole world of dialect expressions became more or less familiar to his many readers, and many of them became naturalised in our colloquial and our literary language. Among the colloquial words which are found in Scott's writings are *rampage*, *bogle*, and *scunner* ; while others, like *daft*, *astir*, *sleuthhound*, *glamour*, *gruesome*, and the phrase to *dree one's weird*, found an immediate welcome in the literary language. Among these the

<sup>1</sup> Scott gives a picture of his own method when in the *Antiquary* (chap. xix.), he describes the visit of Mr. Oldbuck to the aged Elspeth in the fisherman's hut. He found her singing an old ballad in which occurred the line :

" With a chafron of steel on each horse's head."

" 'Chafron !' exclaimed the Antiquary—' equivalent, perhaps, to *cheveron*—the word's worth a dollar'—and down it went in his red book."

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word *glamour* is of special interest, not only owing to its derivation from *grammar*, but because it has come to embody the very spirit of Romantic Movement, in which Scott played so important a part. *Glamour* in Scotland simply meant spells or magic, and was used, and is still used, in the phrase to "cast the glamour" over someone ; but it soon acquired, in literary English, its present meaning of "magical beauty," for which no other language possesses an exact equivalent. The phrases "Celtic glamour," and "Celtic twilight," have become somewhat vague and hackneyed, and Lowland Scotch is not especially Celtic in origin or character. And yet we certainly have derived from Scotland a remarkable vocabulary, expressive of gloom and mystery ; and in words like *murk*, *gloaming*, *glamour*, *gruesome*, *fey*, *freit*, *bogle*, *warlock*, *wraith*, *eerie*, *eldritch*, *uncanny* and *second sight*, we find good examples of expressive power in local dialects, and learn how a standard language may enrich itself by drawing on their resources.

But the dialect words which have come to us through literature are not all of northern origin. Both Dickens and Thackeray were fond of using popular and dialect words, and to Thackeray we owe, for instance, the current use of the word *snob*, which has now, with characteristic energy, pushed its way into society all over Europe. Other dialect words have been introduced by American authors ; for the American settlers took with them not only the standard English, but many local terms as well. *Hub* is an instance of this ; it is a dialect word both in England and America, which was brought into literature first by Oliver Wendell

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Holmes, who described the dome of the Boston State House as the "hub of the solar system." Boston soon acquired the humorous designation of the "Hub of the Universe," and the term came into more general use, as we have seen, with the popularity of the bicycle. These words, *snob* and *hub*, are among those monosyllables which do so much to give the English language its concise and vivid character ; and, as I have shewn, a large number of similar terms, little penny-pieces of our speech—words like *pet*, *blight*, *tram*, *fun*, *nag*—have also been coined in the admirable mints of the local dialects.

Tennyson, Edward FitzGerald, and Stevenson are among the nineteenth-century lovers of dialect words, which Tennyson used so vividly in his dialect poems ; and our living writers, Mr. Thomas Hardy and Mr. Kipling, have made effective use of the provincial vocabularies.

In this manner, therefore, men of letters have aided, and still aid, the less conscious processes by which popular and dialect words make their way into the standard vocabulary. To many readers the use of local terms is often tiresome, and they reluct at works containing dialect, and do not see why, with the great and copious vocabulary of standard English at their command, writers should fill their books with uncouth words and unfamiliar grammar. And yet the instinct which leads so many authors to echo and reproduce popular and dialect speech is a sound and healthy one ; for both the peasant and the literary artist employ, after all, much the same kind of language ; both are concerned more with life and idiom than with dictionaries

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and the rules of grammar. Both wish to express their feelings when they speak, and strive to clothe their thoughts with flesh and blood and make them visible to their hearers. A writer cannot create his own language ; he must take what society provides him, and in his search for sensuous and pictured speech he naturally has recourse to the rich and living material created by generations of popular and unconscious artists. Here he finds an energetic and picturesque language, rich in images and irony, and full of a zest, a joy in life, which are of priceless value to him. This zest, this eager interest, is embodied in hundreds of terms and phrases of good-natured contempt and humorous vituperation ; in expressions of surprise and amazement and wonder ; and it is owing to their irresistible good spirits and rude energy, the rollicking way they have with them, that so many "low" words find their way into our drawing-rooms. But popular speech possesses another quality—that of imagination and poetry—which is of even greater value to the literary artist. For just as musicians have discovered in labourers' cottages a wild growth of beautiful folk-music, so an almost equal beauty of folk-poetry is to be found in the same haunts—imaginative speech, growing, like the music, out of the heart of common life, and racy of the soil from which it springs. That "incomparable sweetness in its clownishness," which Dryden noted in the Doric dialect of Theocritus, "like a fair shepherdess in her country russet, talking in a Yorkshire tone,"<sup>1</sup> is a note of wild music which

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Sylvæ* (Dryden's Essays, ed. W. P. Ker, vol. i. p. 265).



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poets have often tried to recapture, and have found by their return to rustic speech, that contact with the earth by means of which they have renewed their strength.

But it is hardly necessary to insist upon this point ; Wordsworth, Burns and Scott (to mention no others), have shown us the value of the popular vernacular ; and we know how much our Romantic Movement owes to Percy's publication of old ballads, with their rich vocabulary of popular words and phrases.

We are all, moreover, familiar with the surprising and beautiful discoveries which have recently been made by those who have studied the peasant speech of Ireland. Synge has told us how he learnt his vocabulary from herds and fishermen, beggar-women and ballad-singers, and he adds : " When I was writing the ' Shadow of the Glen,' . . . I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant-girls in the kitchen." Is there talk like this, one wonders, in our English houses ? Could English writers, who sit in their studies and, in Synge's scornful phrase, deal like Ibsen and Zola " with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words," find equal treasures, should they lie, note-book in hand, with their ears to chinks in the floors above their kitchens ? The picture suggests itself to the mind, only to be dismissed ; neither the chinks could be found in English houses, nor the language which Synge heard in the wild parts of Ireland. And yet, as our dialect glossaries show, there is much of interest and

literary value to be learned from rustic speech in England ; and Edward FitzGerald, in his *Suffolk Sea Phrases*, has shown us how much even an amateur can collect who will take the trouble. Anyone, indeed, who has the opportunity, and who is a lover of good English, will find it well worth his while to make, as FitzGerald made, a collection of rustic words and phrases. But access to these treasures is, unfortunately, by no means as easy as it used to be. For although most country people still talk their own dialects, they have now learnt at school another form of English, which they use with greater or less success when speaking to people of education ; and they are not readily drawn out by anyone they look upon as a gentleman. They have become more or less bilingual, speaking among themselves their old vernacular, but talking to us a pale School Board copy of our own language. Rare words, like rare birds, are difficult of observation. Patience is necessary ; we must be able to talk on easy terms with our neighbours ; we must listen carefully and ask no linguistic questions, nor beg to have a word repeated ; uneducated people will seldom admit that they know of, or have used, dialect expressions. But if we have ourselves some knowledge of the dialect, and can address our neighbours in their own language, they will soon lapse into their native and natural way of speaking. ❖

This study of dialect, and the hunt for out-of-the-way terms, seems to have been more popular forty or fifty years ago than it is now ; and in the proceedings of the Philological and the Dialect Societies, and in the prefaces to old provincial glossaries, will be found now

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and then "hunting anecdotes," showing the zest and pleasure of the pursuit. I find, for instance, in a communication made in 1876 to the Philological Society by that well-known student of language, Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte, a quaint account of an expedition he made to Somerset to look for survivals of the old *Ic* or *Ich* for *I*. "I began my researches," he writes, "at Cannington, west of the Parret and east of the Quantocks, and there I was informed by the Rev. Mr. Bristow, its Rector, that one Edward Wills, sometimes called Thorne, had stated to him that he, Edward Wills, was well acquainted with the word *utchy* for *I*; that he had used it himself, and that it would also be used at present, but rarely, amongst old peasants. I lost no time in visiting myself this respectable patriarch of ninety-four years, and he repeated to me the above statements."<sup>1</sup> The Prince adds that at another village near Crewkerne he had "been very fortunate in finding the desired words *utchy* and *utch*"; and he adds, in regard to *ize* for *I*, "I know a man who still maintains its existence about Bideford." Another French collector tells with enthusiasm that he found in the talk of an old woman in Auvergne, when she was telling how she had pushed a calf into her cowshed, a survival of the great classical word *urgere*, which all philologists had till then believed to have been dead for centuries in the popular speech of Europe. And even when a glossary for a certain district had been compiled, there was the interest of correcting or adding to it. "Many, too, of these glossaries, on which much labour has been expended, will still bear supple-

<sup>1</sup> English Dialect Society *Miscellanies*, 1877, vol. i. pp. 22-24.

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menting," another enthusiast writes. "A curious illustration of this occurred to ourselves when lately staying in a country village. The ground had been twice worked over by two different collectors. The later, too, had gleaned a thousand words, which his predecessor had neglected. The spot did not therefore seem very promising. We, however, in the course of the month, bagged some hundred and fifty new specimens. This gives an average of five a day, which may be looked upon as very fair sport." "We are sorry to add," this collector remarks, "that an excellent clergyman and an energetic schoolmaster are committing irreparable mischief by teaching the people to read."<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1865; since that time "excellent clergymen and energetic schoolmasters" have certainly waged a war on local words not unlike that war waged by gamekeepers on many species of wild birds; but in both cases the result has been not so much to extinguish rare species, as to make them more shy and difficult of observation; and anyone who wishes to form a vocabulary of local terms can still make an excellent collection if he be wary and careful. He can hardly hope now (although this, too, is just possible) to find, like the first collectors, an ancient jewel of Saxon language, unrecorded since the time of King Alfred, or some bit of unknown Dutch or French gold; but he can discover many quaint old words and usages, and many new terms, fresh-coined in the ever-active mint of popular speech. And the knowledge he acquires of the way his neighbours use words, and the meanings they attach to them, will sometimes be of practical

<sup>1</sup> *Cornhill*, xii. 1865, p. 32.

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importance. One collector tells us of a lady in Yorkshire who got into unnecessary trouble through ignorance of the meaning attached to the word "idle," in the district where she lived. She told the church-choir they were "idle," whereupon half of them resigned, as they thought she had accused them of leading vicious lives. Another states that he was able to save a man from a heavy sentence by explaining that the *neife* with which he admitted he had struck his neighbour was not a "knife," but simply an old dialect word for "fist." I was myself once saved by the *Dialect Dictionary* from a comic misunderstanding; I was dozing in the chair at a small political meeting in the country, when I was alarmed and startled by hearing a local orator declare that they of that district had no desire to see Tariff Reformers "fawnicating about the village." I felt that as chairman I ought perhaps to make a protest against the use of this vocable. As, however, the respectable audience received this remark, which was frequently repeated, without surprise, and even with applause, I decided to wait and consult the *Dialect Dictionary*, in which, on my return to my books of reference, I found that the word "fawnicate" meant no more in local usage, than to behave in a deceitful or intriguing way.

## VI

Such are the adventures and humours of word-collecting. But the pursuit deserves to be more than the fad or amiable hobby of a few enthusiasts—it is one which should interest us all. Since our language

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seems to be growing year by year more foreign, abstract and colourless in character, it stands in greater need than ever of this vigorous and native reinforcement. Not only writers, but everyone of us who speaks English, could help in this, were we not paralyzed by that superstitious feeling of awe and respect for standard English which is now being spread by the diffusion of education. We are becoming more and more the slaves of schoolmasters and proof-correctors ; and it is perhaps more than a coincidence that the two writers of the nineteenth century who have perhaps done the most to enrich our language, Carlyle and Sir Walter Scott, were both born and educated in a part of the country where standard English had not yet succeeded in establishing a tyrannical supremacy, or in banishing dialect from the speech of educated people.

If we ask why the standard language, the English of the educated classes, should find it necessary to draw so largely on dialect, and popular, and what we call incorrect speech, for these needed elements, instead of providing them out of its own resources, it is not difficult to find an answer. For it is inevitable that when any form of speech becomes a standard and written language, it should as a consequence lose much of its linguistic freedom. All forms of speech have of course their rules and usages, but in a written language these rules and usages become much more settled and stereotyped ; they are registered in grammars and dictionaries, they are taught in schools ; and words and idioms are judged, not by their expressive power, but by their "correctness," that is to say by their agreement with accepted standards.

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Such an attitude or state of mind tends of course to fix grammar and pronunciation, to discourage assimilation, and to cripple the free and spontaneous powers of word-creation. These powers indeed can never be entirely suppressed, but they are driven into the outlawed regions of slang, and manifest themselves for the most part in grotesque or humorous perversions of form or meaning—perversions whose value is lessened or destroyed by the conscious desire to shock or surprise which inspires them.

A standard language moreover is, under modern conditions, a written rather than a spoken language. The printed word becomes more and more the reality, the spoken word an echo or faint copy of it. This inversion of the normal relation between speech and writing, this predominance of the eye over the ear, of the written symbol over its audible equivalent, tends to deprive the language of that vigour and reality which comes, and can only come, from its intimate association with the acts and passions of men, as they vividly describe and express them in their speech. Freed from the necessity of using terms which can be easily spoken and understood, and more concerned with abstract thought than feeling, the written language, when it finds new terms are necessary, supplies its needs by borrowing learned words, or by making long compounds out of Greek or Latin elements. It is by means of these mechanical or dead words that it tries to make up for its lack of original power ; and their abundant use, and the mechanical ease by which they can be formed, tend in their turn to cripple still further what creative powers the language may still possess.

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It is not my object however to attack Standard English, or depreciate its value and importance. Such an accepted form of national language, with its varied vocabulary, all its nice distinctions of grammar, and all the enrichments and adornments it has received from past generations, is undoubtedly the most precious inheritance of any people—the depository of its noblest memories, the treasure-house of its ideal possessions. It is a patrimony which we feel, and rightly feel, must be jealously guarded ; and the instinct is essentially a sound one which makes us shrink from any offence against its accepted usages and rules. But the position of the King's English is a sure one, and is founded on the firm basis of social need. Since it has long since become a class dialect, the vernacular of the governing social order, a knowledge of its usages, and an un-deviating obedience to its laws, have become almost a necessity for those who would share in the privileges of the educated classes. More and more, too, this standard speech, and the respect for its usages, is being extended, and there is not the slightest danger at the present day that its authority or dominance will be questioned or disregarded. The danger lies rather in the other direction—that in our scrupulous and almost superstitious respect for correct English, we may forget that other and freer forms of spoken English have also their value, and make useful contributions to our speech.

For after all a standard language never exists entirely on its own capital ; in its origin one among many dialects, it becomes supreme, but it never really crushes out its competitors. Nor would it be to its advantage



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to do so, for from these competitors, made subordinate but not destroyed, it is able to draw valuable elements for its own enrichment. The regions of popular speech have always formed, and still form a vast district, full of wild, uncouth, and extravagant growths, perversions, vulgarisms, and degradations of all kinds. They are the products of that exuberant soil, but they are by no means the only products. In the beautiful ancient words which still preserve their life there, and in the vivid new terms, monosyllables and compound words which would be useful additions to our vocabulary, there much can be found that might enrich our standard speech with a homely element which it can hardly provide out of its own resources. If a sense of the importance of this element were more widely diffused amongst us, if we realized more clearly the value of popular speech, we might hope for a change of linguistic taste which might benefit our language, and help to correct some of the less happy tendencies. It must be confessed, however, that we are at the present moment, far from this modification of taste, this linguistic change of heart—the trend of fashion is quite in the opposite direction, and our Standard English is growing more and more learned and difficult and undemocratic. But linguistic fashions are not governed by absolutely blind forces ; they always depend to a large extent—and now they more than ever depend—on the taste of the educated classes. The duty of these classes is, under normal conditions, one of conservatism, of opposition to the popular tendencies ; but when the forces of conservatism become too strong, they may do well to relax their rigour, and lean more to the democratic side.

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For human speech is after all a democratic product, the creation, not of scholars and grammarians, but of unschooled and unlettered people. Scholars and men of education may cultivate and enrich it, and make it flower into all the beauty of a literary language ; but its rarest blooms are grafted on a wild stock, and its roots are deep-buried in the common soil. From that soil it must still draw its sap and nourishment, if it is not to perish, as the other standard languages of the past have perished, when, in the course of their history, they have been separated and cut off from the popular vernacular—from that vulgar speech which has ultimately replaced their outworn and archaic forms.

## CHAPTER V

### ENGLISH IDIOMS

#### I

WHEN writing of the enrichment that our standard language derives from popular, free and unschooled English, I confined myself in the last chapter to single words, about whose history we have more or less definite information. But there is another element of enrichment which is of greater importance, although it is more difficult to trace, which comes from the same sources, is produced by the same powers, and makes its way through more or less the same channels into our literary language. This element is composed of what we call "idioms"; but, as the word has various meanings, I must define its use in this connection. "Idiom" is sometimes used, in English as in French, to describe the form of speech peculiar to a people or nation. We also use "idiom" for the meaning expressed by the French word *idiotisme*, that is to say, those forms of expression, of grammatical construction, or of phrasing, which are peculiar to a language, and approved by its usage, although the meanings they convey are often different from their grammatical or logical signification. As we have no longer a word

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in English corresponding to *idiotisme*,<sup>1</sup> I shall use "idiom" in this chapter in its narrower sense, meaning the idiosyncrasies of our language, and, above all, those phrases which are verbal anomalies, which transgress, that is to say, either the laws of grammar or the laws of logic.<sup>2</sup>

Writers on the English language make many references to English idioms, but I have not been able to find any complete collection of them, or any exhaustive treatment of the subject; there is, however, much useful information in Professor Earle's chapter on Idiom in his *English Prose*; <sup>3</sup> Dr. Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar* contains much about English idioms of great interest; and several dictionaries of English phrases and idioms have been published.<sup>4</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Idiotisme*, which is a sixteenth-century borrowing through late Latin into French from Greek, was naturalized as "idiotism" in English in the seventeenth century, but has now almost disappeared. As it implies vulgarity by its etymology, and suggests idiocy by its relation to "idiot," it is not a happy word; but the distinction it marks is a useful one, and it is a pity that we have no term like, for instance, the Spanish *modismo* for it.

<sup>2</sup> Although some of the words of our vocabulary are idiomatic phrases which have become compounds, and other words are sometimes used idiomatically, I confine myself almost entirely to phrases, as the *Oxford Dictionary* defines the phrase, that is to say "a small group or collection of words expressing a single notion, or entering with some degree of unity into the structure of a sentence."

<sup>3</sup> *English Prose, its Elements, History, and Usage*, by John Earle, M.A. (1890).

<sup>4</sup> The best of these are *English Idioms*, by James Main Dixon, M.A. (Thomas Nelson and Sons); *A Desk-Book of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases*, by Vizetelly and de Bekker (Funk & Wagnalls Company), 1923; *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, and *Cassell's Book of Quotations*, by W. Gurney Benham (Cassell & Co., Ltd.). But none of these is at all complete, and the histories and derivations of the idioms

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the main source for any study of the subject is, of course, the *Oxford Dictionary*, which, with its enormous collection of instances, its historical method, and its many pages of subtle analysis, has brought together an immense wealth of material for the linguistic student. An adequate study of our idioms, based on all this new material, will no doubt be made one day by some one much more competent than I am to deal with the subject. In the meantime, however, there may be a place for a preliminary sketch, written by a reader of this Dictionary, who has made for himself a large collection of idioms, and who has arrived at certain conclusions about the idiomatic element in our speech, and its place in literary diction, which seem to him not devoid of general interest.

Of the idiosyncrasies of our language, the usages of syntax and grammar which are peculiar to it, without being grammatical or logical anomalies, I shall say but little ; the subject is too vast a one to be surveyed in a single essay—nor indeed am I competent to make such a survey. It may be noted, however, that the idiosyncrasy of English, like that of other languages, is perhaps most strikingly exemplified in the use of prepositions. Prepositional usage in all languages

they quote should be checked by reference to the *Oxford Dictionary*. There are three collections of French phrases which are useful, *French Idioms and Proverbs*, by De V. Payen-Payne (Oxford Press), 1924; *Recueil de locutions françaises*, par Armand-Georges Billaudeau (Paris, 1903); and Macmillan's *Selection of French Idioms*, by Plan and Roget (1922). Macmillan also publish an excellent *Selection of German Idioms*, by Myra Taker (1900). For Spanish idioms, see *A New Spanish-English and English-Spanish Idiom and Phrase-Book*, by G. R. Macdonald (N.D.), and *Spanish Idioms*, by Becker and Mora (1886).

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contains, as Professor Jespersen points out, much that is peculiar and arbitrary ; the relations to be expressed by prepositions are often so vague and indefinite, that many times one might seem logically just as right as another, and it is only "that tyrannical, capricious, utterly incalculable thing, idiomatic usage," which has decreed that this preposition must be used in this case, and that in another.<sup>1</sup>

A few instances will illustrate the arbitrary character of our use of prepositions ; we tamper *with*, but we tinker *at* ; we find a fault *in* a person, but find fault *with* him ; we act *on* the spur of the moment, but *at* a moment's notice ; we are insensible *to*, but are unconscious *of* ; we say *for* long, but *at* length—not *at* long, although "*at* long" was once an English idiom. So we now say *on* earth, when *in* earth was the older usage, as we see in the Lord's Prayer : "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."<sup>2</sup>

Prepositional usage not only varies from age to age, but it is also often different in different classes, and also in the various countries where English is spoken. Thus the choice between "*in* a ship," or "*on* a ship," is a difference between sea- and land-usage. In America they speak of getting *on* or *off* a train, in England of getting *in* or *out* of it ; "*up* to time" is the English

<sup>1</sup> Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, p. 22. See also *The King's English*, pp. 161-70.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Abbott gives in his *Shakespearian Grammar* many instances of prepositional usage which are now obsolete. "The shades of meaning," he says, "which suggest the use of different prepositions are sometimes almost indistinguishable. We say 'a canal is full of water.' There is no reason why we should not also say 'full with water,' as a garden is 'fair with flowers' " (p. 93).

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idiom, "on time" the American. The difference is one of usage; either is correct from the point of view of grammar.

More interesting are the cases where a difference of usage is not really arbitrary, but may express a shade of meaning which we are ourselves perhaps unconscious of. A curious instance of this is the way we use the prepositions *in* and *at* with the names of places. We say some one is *in* London, *in* Rome, *in* Paris, but usually *at* Oxford, *at* Rouen. The general rule is that we use *in* for large cities and capitals, *at* for smaller places. There is, however, a notable exception: we commonly use *in* rather than *at* even for a small place if we ourselves are there, probably because then it bulks more largely in our imagination.<sup>1</sup>

One of the largest class of English idioms consists of terse adverbial phrases formed by the collocation of a preposition with a noun or adjective, phrases like "at hand," "at length," "at leisure"; "by chance," "by fits," "by far"; "for once," "~~for~~ ever," "for good," "for instance"; "in fact," "in general," "in truth"; "of course," "of late"; "on hand," etc.

Some of these phrases and combinations which are in constant use, as "indoors," "downstairs," etc., have

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare used *at* London, when, as Dr. Abbott points out, London was a smaller place than it is now. The French idiom would be à *Londres*, à *Paris*. Professor Darmesteter, in comparing the use of the French preposition à with the English equivalent *to*, points out that à would, in French, replace *in* and *with* and *by* in the English phrases "to be *in* Paris," "to work *with* a machine," "to work *by* the light of a lamp." "The French mind," he says, "more mobile than the Saxon mind, allows itself to be drawn aside by the most delicate relations, and complacently follows the turns of a subtle analysis." (A. Darmesteter, *The Life of Words* (English translation), 1886 (p. 90).

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become fused together as compounds, and are printed as one word. "Instead" is sometimes a compound word, but sometimes ("in his stead," etc.) the elements are still separable. The verb "atone" is derived from the adverbial phrase "at one."

Even more numerous are the idiomatic collocations of verbs followed by prepositions, or by prepositions used as adverbs. Collocations of this kind, "phrasal verbs" we may call them,<sup>1</sup> like "keep down," "set up," "put through," and thousands of others,<sup>2</sup> are not only one of the most striking idiosyncrasies of our language, but, as we shall have occasion to note later on, they enter as well into a vast number of idiomatic anomalies—phrases with meanings not implied by the meanings of the words which compose them. These phrasal verbs correspond to the compound verbs in synthetic languages. Thus "fall out" has the meaning of the Latin *excidere*, the German *ausfallen*; "take away" of *absumere* or *ἀπαίρειν*. As a matter of fact we have in English both compound and phrasal verbs, often composed of the same elements—"upgather" and "gather up," "uproot" and "root up," "underlie" and "lie under." In these instances the meaning is the same in each, but in other cases the meaning is changed by the grouping of the different elements:

<sup>1</sup> The term "phrasal verbs" was suggested to me by the late Dr. Bradley; not, as he wrote, that he was satisfied with it, or would not welcome any alternative that he could feel to be an improvement. But, as he said, one cannot write of these verbs without some workable description; and although the word "phrasal" is perhaps objectionable in formation, it fills a want, and is sometimes indispensable.

<sup>2</sup> There are some phrasal verbs with two prepositions: "to take up with," "to make up to," "to get on with," "to go in for," etc.



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"undergo" and "go under," "overtake" and "take over," have not the same signification ; and "upset" and "set up" are almost exactly opposite in meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Like the adverbial phrases, these phrasal verbs sometimes form compound words, nouns like "break-down," "setback," "drawback," "go-between," "turn-out," "show-up," "talking-to," and adjectives like "grown-up," "put-up," "done-for," and many others.

### II

Among the idiomatic idiosyncrasies of English are a large number of phrasal collocations or doublets, in which two words are habitually used together for the sake of emphasis. Some of the commonest are :

At beck and call,	Fear and trembling,
To cut and run,	Fits and starts,
Down and out,	Free and easy,
Dust and ashes,	For good and all,
Enough and to spare,	Hammer and tongs,
Far and away,	Hard and fast,
Far and wide,	Heart and soul,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Earle relates an anecdote of a German resident in England who spoke English perfectly for ordinary purposes, but who, not having mastered the idiomatic differences of meaning between *upset* and *set up*, recommended some wine to a guest with the remark, "You might drink a bottle of it, and it would not set you up." (*English Prose*, p. 144.) Another foreigner, wishing to recommend a tonic, wrote that it had "quite upset him." In the German separable compound verbs like *ausfallen*, *aufgeben*, etc., the adverb in simple tenses becomes separable and follows the verb—*ich gebe es auf*, etc. (See Bradley, *The Making of English*, p. 122.) We have in English one curious case where English phrasal verbs enter into compounds like the German. In phrasal verbs with *out*, like "cast out," "speak out," "lie out," the particles become "outcast," "outspoken," "outlying."

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High and mighty,	To pick and choose,
Hole and corner,	Rough and tumble,
Hue and cry,	Sackcloth and ashes,
By leaps and bounds,	Six of one and half-a-dozen
A man and a brother,	of another,
Null and void,	Stuff and nonsense,
Odds and ends,	Tooth and nail,
Out and away,	Waifs and strays,
Over and above,	Ways and means,
Over head and ears,	Well and good.

These are sometimes merely emphatic repetitions of the same word :

Again and again,	Out and out,
By and by,	Over and over,
Miles and miles,	Round and round,
More and more,	To share and share about,
Neck and neck,	Through and through,
On and on,	To turn and turn again.
One by one,	

In some cases the emphasis is helped by alliteration, as in :

Bag and baggage,	Rough and ready,
To chop and change,	Safe and sound,
Humming and hawing,	At sixes and sevens,
Light and leading,	Slow and sure,
With might and main,	Spick and span,
Part and parcel,	Sticks and stones,
Rack and ruin,	Then and there.

Sometimes rhyme adds to the effect :

Art and part,	Out and about,
Fair and square,	Scot and lot,
High and dry,	Wear and tear.
By hook or by crook,	

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Other habitual collocations of this kind are formed by the contrast of two alternatives :

Heads or tails,	Neck or nothing,
Hit or miss,	Neither here nor there,
A jot or tittle,	Neither rhyme nor reason,
To kill or cure,	Now or never,
For love or money,	Rain or shine,
To make or mar,	To sink or swim,
To mend or end,	Sooner or later,
More or less,	To stand or fall.

Sometimes two alternatives are joined together to make inclusive phrases :

Ever and anon,	Now and then,
Fast and loose,	Off and on,
First and last,	One and all,
Give and take,	To right and left,
From head to heels,	Through thick and thin,
Here and there,	Time and again,
Hide and seek,	To and fro,
Hither and thither,	From top to toe,
Ins and outs,	Touch and go,
The long and the short of it,	Ups and downs, Between wind and water.

To these may be added some of those habitual comparisons which are so numerous in popular speech, and of which a good many are established in the standard language :

As bold as brass,	As fit as a fiddle,
As cool as a cucumber,	As good as gold,
As cross as two sticks,	As hard as nails,
As dead as a doornail,	As large as life,
As deaf as an adder,	As like as two peas,
As dull as ditchwater,	As mad as a March hare,

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As meek as a lamb,	As sound as a bell,
As old as the hills,	As steady as a rock,
As plain as a pikestaff,	As slippery as an eel,
As pleased as Punch,	As stiff as a poker,
As right as rain,	As thick as thieves.
As safe as houses,	

Certain proverbs and proverbial phrases are also so firmly embedded in our colloquial speech that, like the figurative proverbs and phrases which I shall mention later, they may perhaps, without stretching the definition too far, be regarded as English idioms :

All's well that ends well,	More haste, less speed,
Better late than never,	The more the merrier,
Extremes meet,	Necessity knows no law,
Familiarity breeds contempt,	Nothing venture, nothing win,
No fool like an old fool,	Out of sight, out of mind,
A friend in need is a friend indeed,	Penny wise, pound foolish,
Handsome is as handsome does,	In for a penny, in for a pound,
He laughs best who laughs last,	Seeing is believing,
Least said, soonest mended,	Two heads are better than one,
A miss is as good as a mile,	Where there's a will there's a way,
	While there is life there is hope.

Our speech is full of habitual phrases like "when all is said and done," "if the worst comes to the worst," "all right," "you are right," "how do you do?" which, if translated into a foreign language, must be rendered in some equivalent phrase, not in a word-for-word translation. This test of a translation is a good

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touchstone of idiom ; a logical phrase, "the man is rich," can be rendered word for word, but if we say "the man is 'well off,' or 'well to do,'" some other expression must be found. Even the simplest phrasal collocation like "far and away" would lose its idiomatic force in a word for word translation, while other phrases would present a most awkward appearance. Thus our common greeting, "How do you do?" sounds oddly enough in Voltaire's translation, *comment faites-vous faire ?* The English expression, "you are right," cannot, as Professor Earle points out, "be rendered word-for-word into good French, German, or Latin. In French it would become *Vous avez raison* ; in German, *Sie haben recht* ; in Latin, *Recte dicis*. It would be un-English to say 'you have reason,' or 'you have right,' or 'you speak rightly' ; it is according to English idiom to say 'you are right.'"<sup>1</sup>

### III

These, then, are a few of the idiosyncrasies of our language ; but idiosyncrasies are of double interest when they are anomalies as well, when there is present in an idiom, not only some peculiarity of speech, but some irregularity, some violation of, or infringement upon, what are considered the laws of language. These idiomatic transgressions are of two kinds, the rules of grammar may be broken, or the rules of logic. Of these, the first kind, the ungrammatical phrases made acceptable by usage, are the most obvious, and in any old-fashioned book on good English will be found lists

<sup>1</sup> *English Prose*, p. 255.

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of these wild creatures of talk, nailed up, like noxious birds and vermin, by the purists and preservers of our speech. The phrase "it's me" is a familiar instance ;<sup>1</sup> other instances are "who did you see?" "than whom,"<sup>2</sup> "very pleased," "try and go" (for "try to go"), "different" or "averse" *to*, the split infinitive, the use of the superlative when only two objects are compared ("the best," instead of the "better of the two"), and phrases like "less than no time," "more than pleased," "as tall or taller than you," etc.

Grammar, in the sense which we usually give to the word, that is to say not a mere neutral registration of what our speech-forms are, but a regulative ideal of what according to the laws of logic and analogy they ought to be,—grammar in this sense is the natural enemy of idiom, and continually preys upon it. The tendency of modern grammarians is to accept usage, and

<sup>1</sup> Professor Sonnenschein says that "it's me" is not incorrect, although "it is uncertain what the explanation of the usage is. . . . Perhaps the form 'me' may be due to the same reason as leads the French to use 'moi' in sentences like 'C'est moi.' Both the French 'moi' and the English 'me' were originally accusatives ; but 'moi' has come to be used as a *special form* of the pronoun in various constructions, sometimes for the nominative, sometimes for the accusative, and sometimes for the dative. And the same may be true of the English 'me.' " (*A New English Grammar*, iii. p. 52.)

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "than whom" is a great stumbling-block in the path of the purists. It is universally used, it is authorized by Milton :

"Which when Beelzebub perceived, than whom,  
Satan except, none higher sat, (*P. L.*, ii. 299.)

and yet can one regard "than" as a preposition? But its convenience is so great, and "than who" so impossible, that perhaps, as the authors of *The King's English* put it, to rule it out "amounts to saying that man is made for grammar and not grammar for man" (p. 64). But then, what about "than me," "than him," "than her"?

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to explain it by means of history and psychology ; but the older grammarians conceived that they had a higher mission. From the study of Latin, and from a comparison of different European languages, they arrived at a conception of universal grammar, based upon the laws of logic and the constitution of the human mind ; and this the grammarians of each country tried to impose upon their own language—to “ refine it,” as Dr. Johnson said, “ to grammatical purity ” ; to banish as far as possible its local idiosyncrasies, to do away with its anomalies and exceptions, and to impose regularity upon it within its own domestic economy. Owing to the efforts of these grammarians a number of English idiomatic usages have been stigmatized as incorrect, and driven from our standard speech. Of these, perhaps, the most conspicuous is the double negative, which was perfectly correct in the time of Chaucer, lingered on till the age of Shakespeare, and is still current in the speech of the vast majority of English people. Owing, however, to the logical (but most unpsychological) notion that doubling a negative destroys, instead of strengthening it, this idiom, although it was correct in Greek, and is found in French, Spanish, and Russian, is regarded as a gross vulgarism in modern English.<sup>1</sup> So also the double comparative and the double superlative, as we find them in Shakespeare, “ more better,”

<sup>1</sup> See Jespersen on the double negative in *S.P.E. Tract* No. XVI, p. 9. In the form of “ not . . . neither,” the double negative lingered on in standard English through the eighteenth century, and was used by Lamb, though perhaps as a conscious archaism. “ I was suddenly transported, how or whether I could scarcely make out,—but to some celestial region. It was not the real heavens neither.” (*The Child Angel*, in *Last Essays of Elia*.)

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"more nearer," "most boldest," "most unkindest," are now considered most incorrect. But anomalous constructions of this kind are, as Dr. Abbott puts it, "merely the natural results of a spirit which preferred clearness and vigour of expression to logical symmetry."

Another idiom which was once correct, but which grammarians have succeeded in stigmatizing as a vulgarism, is the expression "these kind" and "these sort" of things, although it is found up to the nineteenth century in many good authors, and although "by this means" is still regarded as good English. "For to" joined with the infinitive is now a vulgarism, although it is found in the Bible, "what went ye out for to see?" and in Shakespeare's line, "Forbid the sea for to obey the moon."<sup>1</sup>

Whether we regard the elimination of these old idioms as a benefit, or as a detriment, to the language, the loss or gain in any particular instance is not perhaps of great importance. In one point, however, the attempt to enforce an ideal of "grammatical purity" on our language has inflicted upon it, as Professor Earle suggests, a serious injury. The point I refer to is the notion that it is illiterate and incorrect, or at least inelegant, to place a preposition or adverb at the end of a clause or sentence. It was Dryden, himself one of the most idiomatic of our writers, who first expressed this notion; and in reprinting his *Essay on Dramatic*

<sup>1</sup> "This ~~here~~" (*celui-ci*) is now regarded as a vulgarism, but was once in good use. With an interposed noun (as in "this man here") it is still current colloquially, though rare in literature; it appears in *Comus*, line 672,

"And first behold this cordial julep here."



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*Poesy* he took pains to eliminate idioms of this kind, changing "the end he aimed at" into "the end at which he aimed," and "the age I live in" to "the age in which I live," etc. This notion, that the preposition should precede the word it governs; that it is better to say "the man to whom I had written" than "the man I had written to," became little by little almost universally accepted, and Hallam, writing towards the middle of the nineteenth century, said that this "Anglicism," as he called it, had of late years come to be reckoned inelegant and proscribed in all cases.<sup>1</sup> This notion still persists, although the idiom is perfectly good English, and has only been condemned because it was not found in Latin, or in languages derived from Latin. How consonant it is with our English speech-rhythms, the vigour and conciseness it adds, when skilfully used, to our phrasing, can be appreciated in many a good English sentence :

"Houses are built to live in, and not to look on" (Bacon).

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more a man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out" (Bacon).

"Odd and uncommon characters are the game that I look for, and most delight in" (Addison).

"It [the sundial] was the measure appropriate for sweet plants and flowers to spring by, for the birds to apportion their silvery warblings by, for flocks to pasture and to be led to fold by" (Lamb).

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, 1839, iv. pp. 534-5. Hallam ventures to defend this idiom, as being "sometimes emphatic and spirited." "Nothing but Latin prejudice," he adds, "can make us think it essentially wrong."

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"Was this the face—manly, sober, intelligent—which I had so often despised, made mocks at, made merry with?" (Lamb).

"The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?" (Lamb).<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately the prejudice so incongruously expressed in the schoolmaster's phrase that "the preposition is a very bad word to end a sentence with," has not completely succeeded in banishing this "Anglicism" from our language.

Several useful idioms have also succeeded in establishing themselves in spite of the opposition of purists and grammarians. The "compound possessive," as it is called, "some one else's" instead of "some one's else," the double genitive, "a picture of the King's" (which has a different meaning from "a picture of the King"), are now accepted as useful additions to the resources of our language. So also the passive construction, "the house is being built" (for "the house is building") has become good English, although grammarians protested against this "irregular" collocation of the present participle "being" with the past participle "built." At present the battle rages about the split infinitive, which horrifies the old-fashioned grammarian, but is more dispassionately regarded by linguists of the modern school.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to phrases of this kind, in which the laws

<sup>1</sup> Mr. H. W. Fowler gives a further list of sentences of this kind, drawn from the best English authors in *S.P.E. Tract* No. XIV.

<sup>2</sup> The struggle that is always going on between idiom and grammar is brought daily before our eyes in two connexions. On notice-boards advertising that a house is "to let," this phrase is coming more and more to be changed into what

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of grammar seem to be openly flouted, many slighter anomalies are to be found in our idiomatic speech. Most of our idioms come from the popular vernacular, which still preserves that grammatical freedom which was a characteristic of the older history of our language. Thus, in idioms, as in Elizabethan English, almost any part of speech can take the place, and perform the function, of any other part. The transformation of adjectives and nouns into verbs is a normal process in our speech ; in many idioms adverbs and prepositions appear as nouns ("whys and wherefores," "ups and downs," "ins and outs"); prepositions change into verbs ("to out with," "to up and"), and verbs into nouns ("on the go," "in the know"). Sometimes a transitive sense is given to intransitive verbs, as "to go it," "come it over," and a passive meaning attaches to an active tense, "much to seek," "it makes up well"—but indeed there is hardly any limit to these freedoms ; a phrase like "but me no buts" is a characteristic example of this idiomatic licence.

Ellipsis is another characteristic of idiom ; all constantly repeated adverbial phrases like "last night," "this week," tend to lose their prepositions ; in some like "no doubt," "no wonder," and "murder will out," the verb is omitted ; in others like "at best" "at least," the definite article drops out. Words like "to-day," "to-night," "to-morrow," "o'clock," are terse idiomatic phrases which, owing to

house-agents seem to regard as the more correct expression, "to be let." So also in the birth-notices in *The Times*, the old idiom "of a son" (or daughter) is now being more and more replaced by other phrases which parents seem to regard as more elegant and more correct.

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their constant use, have come to be regarded and pronounced as compound words.

One curious characteristic of many of our commonest idioms is the survival in them of obsolete words—words which are never used except in some special phrase. Examples of these fossil words are :

<i>Hue</i> and cry,	At <i>loggerheads</i> ,
Humming and <i>hawing</i> ,	By <i>rote</i> ,
Rank and <i>file</i> ,	In <i>abeyance</i> ,
Waifs and <i>strays</i> ,	In <i>behoof</i> ,
To <i>chop</i> and change,	In malice <i>prepen</i> se,
To leave in the <i>lurch</i> ,	In a <i>trice</i> ,
To take in the <i>toils</i> ,	Of <i>yore</i> ,
At <i>bay</i> ,	Not a <i>whit</i> ,
At <i>beck</i> and call,	A pig in a <i>poke</i> .

In the phrases "*spick and span*," "*tit for tat*," "*jot or tittle*," two words which are meaningless by themselves combine together into idioms which all of us understand.

In other phrases, archaic and poetic words which otherwise would never pass our lips are preserved for us in our colloquial speech :

<i>Hither</i> and <i>thither</i> ,	A great <i>deal</i> ,
To and <i>fro</i> ,	For the <i>sake</i> of,
Use and <i>wont</i> ,	On one's <i>mettle</i> ,
Might and <i>main</i> ,	At one <i>fell</i> swoop,
<i>Rack</i> and ruin,	To <i>hound</i> on,
<i>Kith</i> and <i>kin</i> ,	To set at <i>naught</i> .

Many obsolete meanings of familiar words are preserved in idiomatic phrases. *Mind* once meant "memory," and this meaning survives in the phrases "to keep in mind," "to call to mind," "time out of mind." It also had the signification of purpose or

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intention, which survives in the phrases "to know one's own mind," "to change one's mind," "to be of two minds," "to have a great mind to." The word *blush* preserves, in the phrase "at the first blush," the meaning of "glimpse" or "sight"; *pain* used to mean "punishment," also "trouble," "effort." These meanings live on in the phrases "pains and penalties," "under the pain of death," "to be at the pains to," "to get for one's pains." The word *brown* preserves its old meaning of "gloomy" in the phrase "a brown study"; the meaning of the idiom "by degrees" comes from the old use of *degree* for "step." A few archaic grammatical forms like "bounden duty," "on bended knee," also survive in idiom.

### IV

These, then, are some of the grammatical and linguistic anomalies which are found in our idiomatic speech. Logical anomalies, phrases in which "more is meant than meets the ear"; in which the meaning conveyed by a phrase is other than the meaning of the words which compose it—locutions which, if literally translated into another language, would have a different signification, or sound like nonsense—idioms of this kind are still more numerous in English, and form one of the most curious and characteristic idiosyncrasies of our speech.

The way in which words take on metaphorical meanings is one of the best-known of linguistic phenomena; the same thing happens to many phrases, which also acquire figurative meanings, and are used for acts or circumstances more or less analogous to those which

gave them birth.<sup>1</sup> Often these figurative idioms are more or less transparent; to "sail too near the wind," to "keep one's head above water," to be "left stranded," are lively metaphors from the speech of sailors, of which the original significations are sufficiently clear. So too, "an axe to grind," the "thin end of the wedge," to "beat about the bush," to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds," are metaphors from other occupations which clearly convey their meaning. But many of our most current idiomatic phrases we use with little or no consciousness of their original use and signification. The meaning of the nautical expression "taken aback," of the military idiom to "pass muster," the origin of the phrase to "burn the candle at both ends," might be more or less familiar to most of us; but probably only a special student could explain such phrases as to "hold at bay," to "curry favour," to "leave in the lurch," to "run riot," to "show the white feather," to "have a white elephant on one's hands." Indeed, there are a number of idiomatic

<sup>1</sup> Figurative idioms are constantly being invented; some find a place for a while in the jargon of families or social groups, and are then forgotten—only one out of many thousands is added to the general vocabulary. Edward FitzGerald gives an amusing instance of this kind of invention, when, in one of his letters, speaking of a little work on which he was engaged, he says that even if it is never published, "I shall have done my little owl. Do you know what that means?—No. Well then; my Grandfather had several Parrots of different sorts and Talents: one of them ('Billy,' I think) could only huff up his feathers in what my Grandfather called an owl fashion; so when Company were praising the more gifted Parrots, he would say—'You will hurt poor Billy's feelings—Come! do your little owl, my dear!' You are to imagine a handsome, hair-powdered, Gentleman doing this—and his Daughter—my Mother,—telling of it. And so it is I do my little owl." (*Letters of Edward FitzGerald to Fanny Kemble*, p. 142.)

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phrases for which even specialists have not been able to find a completely certain explanation, as for instance, to "beat hollow," to "go the whole hog," to "pull some one's leg," to "peter out," to "fight shy," to "take heart of grace," to "send to Coventry." Equally obscure are the phrases "by hook or by crook," "in the wrong box," "in a scrape," to "pay on the nail," to "rule the roast," "the bitter end," a "grass widow," a "game leg," although they are none the less expressive for their apparent absence of logical meaning. This expressiveness of irrelevant phrases is a curious feature of many of our idioms, and seems to show that there is a certain irrelevance in the human mind, a certain love for the illogical and absurd, a reluctance to submit itself to reason, which breaks loose now and then, and finds expression for itself in idiomatic speech. We like our words to have a meaning, for we like them to be vivid; but we sometimes seem almost to prefer inappropriate meanings, as if their very irrelevance appealed to the imagination and added to their vividness and charm.

Although we use the oddest idioms with little or no consciousness of their origin, and without stopping to ask ourselves what they really mean, it is possible with the help of dictionaries, and especially with that of the *Oxford Dictionary*, to trace most of them to their sources.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes these sources are not at all what we might expect. Thus "to spoil a ship for a ha'porth of tar," was originally "to spoil a sheep," and came from tarring sheep, or from treating them with ointment. So the phrase "as plain as a pikestaff" would seem to be drawn from a pikestaff or metal-pointed walking-stick. It was, however, in the original form "plain as a packstaff," meaning as unadorned as the staff on which the pedlar supports his pack when resting. So, too, the idiom to "give the cold shoulder" probably meant, not to turn the

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Metaphorical idioms, and, indeed, many grammatical idioms also, come to us in great numbers from humble occupations and popular forms of sport. Each kind of human activity has its own vocabulary, its terms to describe its materials, its methods, its difficulties, and its aims; and from these vocabularies not only words, but idiomatic phrases often make their way into the standard language. Our speech is never adequate to express the inexhaustible richness of life, with all its relations and thoughts and feelings; the standard language is hampered, too, by many impediments in the always difficult process of word-formation, and is therefore ready to seize on any of the special terms which are already current, and to which it can give the wider significance it desires. Then, too, the idioms and happy phrases invented by people engaged in popular sports and occupations being terse, colloquial, vivid, and charged with eager life, are just the kind that are sought for and welcomed in animated speech. Sailors at sea, hunters with their dogs, labourers in the fields, cooks in their kitchens, needing in some crisis a vigorous phrase of command or warning or reprobation, have often hit on some expressive collocation of words, some vivid and homely metaphor from the objects before them; <sup>1</sup> and these phrases and metaphors, striking the fancy of their companions, have been

human shoulder towards some one, but to put the cold shoulder of mutton before an unhonoured guest.

<sup>1</sup> "Chaque profession, en effet, nourrit à sa manière de bons esprits qui trouvent, dans le sujet habituel qu'ils ont en main, des expressions heureuses, des *termes hardis* et naturels, dont un bon écrivain peut faire ensuite son profit, mais dont seul il ne se serait pas avisé." (Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries de Lundi*, vol. iii. p. 256.)



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adopted into the vocabulary of their special sport or occupation. Soon a number of these phrases are found to be capable of a wider use ; often for convenience, often with a touch of humour, they come to be applied to analogous situations ; a sailor applies his sea-phrases to the predicaments in which he finds himself on land ; the fisherman (as indeed we see in the Gospels) talks of life in terms of fishing ; the housewife helps herself out with metaphors from her kitchen or her farmyard ; the sportsman expresses himself in the idioms of his sport ; and little by little the most vivid and most useful of these phrases make their way, by the means which have been described in a former chapter, from popular speech into the standard language, and come to be universally understood.

### V

In any analysis of the sources of our English idioms those which come to us from the sea will be found to be especially numerous. The vigorous expressive speech of sailors is rich in technical idioms of its own, and many of these have passed, with metaphorical signification, into the speech of Englishmen on land. The sea origin of the following is sufficiently obvious :

To turn adrift,	To lay an anchor to
To cut adrift from,	windward,
To set afloat,	To be in the same boat
To touch bottom,	with,
To steer clear of,	To clear the decks,
To drop the pilot,	To nail one's flag to the
To launch into,	mast,
To launch a person,	To hoist, or lower, one's
To take, or have in tow,	flag, or colours,

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To show one's colours,	To weather, or ride out
To take the helm,	the storm,
To put in one's oar,	At a low ebb,
To rest on one's oars,	All at sea,
To cut the painter,	Between wind and water,
To take in a reef,	In the offing,
To sail in,	In full sail,
To sail before the wind,	In the wake of,
To sail near the wind,	In deep water,
To strike sail to,	In low water,
To take the wind out	On one's beam ends,
of the sails of some	On the rocks,
one,	On the top of the wave,
To trim one's sails to	On the wrong tack,
the wind,	Over head and ears,
To pump ship,	Out of one's depth,
To leave, or rat from,	A sheet anchor,
the sinking ship,	The cut of one's jib,
To make shipwreck,	The man at the wheel,
To keep in watertight	Breakers ahead,
compartments,	Cross currents,
To sink or swim,	Leeway to make up,
To keep one's head	Plain sailing,
above water,	Three sheets in the wind,
To keep one's weather-	Not a shot in the locker,
eye open,	Signals of distress,
To go with or against	Half seas over,
the stream,	High water mark,
To stem the tide,	Left stranded,
To take the tide,	Shipshape and Bristol
To tide over,	fashion,
To look out for squalls,	Tell that to the horse
To blow from another	marines,
quarter,	When one's ship comes
To pour oil on troubled	home.
waters,	

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The following are less obvious in their nautical origin, which is indeed in a few cases doubtful. It is not always possible to trace idioms to their sources; and in these and the following lists, I have placed a question-mark after the more doubtful attributions.

To bear a hand,	To overhaul,
To bear down upon,	To pipe the eye,
To box the compass,	To pull together,
To break the ice,	To put about,
To carry on (?), <sup>1</sup>	To be first, or second-
To come down with a	rate,
run,	To rig out,
To cut and run, <sup>2</sup>	To run high [of the
To fall foul of,	waves],
To find one's bearings,	To see how the land
To forge ahead, <sup>3</sup>	lies,
To give way,	To sheer off,
To give a wide berth to,	To speak by the card,
To go ahead,	To take it easy,
To go by the board,	To throw over [board],
To hold water (?)	To turn in,
To keep abreast with,	At close quarters,
To keep aloof,	On the look-out,
To knock the bottom	On the stocks,
out of,	Under way,
To know the ropes,	By and large,
To make headway,	Hard and fast,
To make way,	High and dry,

<sup>1</sup> "To carry on," with the intransitive meaning, "to continue one's course," comes perhaps from the nautical phrase "to carry on without reefing."

<sup>2</sup> "To cut and run," *i.e.* to cut the cable and make sail without waiting to weigh the anchor.

<sup>3</sup> The nautical word *forge* is a perversion of *force*.

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Touch and go (?) <sup>1</sup>	Hard up [of the helm],
All hands,	A snug, or easy, berth,
All told,	The lay of the land,
Hand over hand,	The coast is clear,
Hard lines,	There's the hitch.

"Taken aback" was originally used of square sails suddenly pressed against the mast by a head wind ; the phrases a "round robin" and a "lump sum," and the idiomatic verb "to skylark," are first found in the nautical vocabulary.

The following may be classed as inland and fresh-water phrases :

To shiver on the brink,	Not to touch with a
To go in at the deep	barge-pole,
end,	On thin ice,
To make a splash,	A stepping-stone to,
To clutch at a straw,	The jumping-off place,
To let in, or let in for	Much water has flown
[from breaking ice],	under the bridges,
To open the sluices,	Still waters run deep.
To stem the torrent,	

A certain number of phrases connected with fish and fishing have also acquired figurative meanings :

To cry stinking fish,	To give line enough,
To drink like a fish,	To give play to,
To fish for,	To hook fast,
To fish out,	To jump at the bait,
To fish in troubled	To nibble at,
waters,	To throw a sprat to
To get a rise out of,	catch a herring,

<sup>1</sup> "Touch and go" is an idiom which is first found in Latimer's *Sermons*. Its present meaning of "a narrow escape" may come from its nautical use of a ship touching rocks or the ground with her keel, and then sailing on without damage.

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In the swim,	The hook without the bait,
A fish out of water,	Other fish to fry,
A big fish in a little pond,	All's fish that comes to his net,
A pretty kettle of fish,	<u>As slippery as an eel,</u>
A queer fish,	There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.
A big haul,	
A red herring,	Straight off the reel (?).

From the speech of soldiers also are derived many idiomatic phrases :

To take alarm,	To let loose the dogs of war,
To take up arms for,	
To lay down one's arms,	To gain, or give, ground,
To mask one's batteries,	To stand one's ground,
To offer battle,	To mount guard,
To beat up,	To spike some one's guns,
To beat a retreat,	To stick to one's guns,
To throw a bomb into,	To cry halt,
To stand in the breach,	To make a halt,
To bear the brunt of,	To fall into line,
To return to the charge,	To steal a march on,
To stick to one's colours	To be at the mercy of,
[? or nautical],	To muster up,
To come off with flying colours[? or nautical],	To pass muster,
To bid defiance to,	To make a stand,
To die in the last ditch,	To sell the pass,
To dig oneself in,	To give, or show, quarter,
To turn face-about,	To send to the right about,
To hold the field,	To lay siege to,
To draw some one's fire,	To make a stand,
To change front,	To raise the standard of revolt,
To run the gauntlet,	To take by storm,

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To poison the wells,	A running fire,
To mark time,	A spark in the powder
Between two fires,	magazine,
By dint of,	The plan of campaign,
In defiance of,	The second line of defence,
In free quarters,	The tug of war,
In open war,	Bag and baggage,
On the alert,	Marching orders,
On duty,	Rank and file,
On the <i>qui vive</i> ,	Shoulder to shoulder,
Under arms,	All along the line,
Under false colours,	Armed at all points,
Up in arms,	As you were,
A false alarm,	Half the battle,
A pitched battle,	True to one's colours.

"A forlorn hope" is an adaptation of the Dutch phrase *verloren hoop*, a "lost troop"; the phrases to be in or out of "touch" with, to keep or lose "touch" with, probably originated in their use in military drill, "touch" meaning the contact between the elbows of a rank of soldiers. The curious idiom, "to fight shy of" is difficult to explain; it has been suggested that it meant originally to lose confidence in battle.

"A flash in the pan" comes from the old flint-lock gun; other phrases from fire-arms are:

To miss fire,	To have a shot at some-
To hang fire,	thing,
To fire away,	Not worth powder and
To go off at half-cock,	shot,
Like a shot,	Lock, stock and barrel.

Some of these combative idioms are derived from tilting and personal contests of various kinds:

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To stab in the back,	To stand with one's back
To look, or speak,	to the wall,
daggers,	To break a lance with, or
To let daylight into,	for,
To bid defiance to,	To measure swords with,
To throw down, or	To enter the lists,
take up, the glove or	To run full tilt at,
gauntlet, <sup>1</sup>	To win one's spurs,
To get past some one's	At daggers drawn,
guard,	At the sword's point,
To get one's knife	On, or off, one's guard,
into,	Up to the hilt,
To go to the wall,	A passage of arms,
	War to the knife.

## VI

From the chase, from hounds and horses, many phrases have come to enrich our colloquial speech, and of all animals the dog and the horse play largest parts in idiom. A few of the canine idioms come from dog-fighting, more from the domesticated animal at home :

To dog the footsteps of,	To have a hair of the
Not to have a dog's	dog that bit you,
chance,	To have a bone to pick
To be dog-cheap, dog-	with,
lazy, dog-tired,	To help lame dogs over
To die like a dog,	stiles,
To lead a dog's life,	To keep a dog and bark
To die a dog's death,	oneself,
To give a dog a bad	To let sleeping dogs lie,
name and hang him,	To teach old dogs new
To go to the dogs,	tricks,

<sup>1</sup> "Gauntlet" in the phrase "run the gauntlet" is another word, being a corruption of "gantlope" from the Swedish *gatalopp*, formed from *gata*, "lane," and *lopp*, "course."

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To bristle up,	Any stick good enough to
To set by the ears (?),	beat a dog with,
To fly in the face of,	Love me, love my dog,
To turn tail,	Every dog has its day,
To go off with one's	Scornful dogs will eat dirty
tail between one's	puddings,
legs,	A bone of contention,
A dog in the manger,	His bark is worse than his
A lucky dog,	bite,
A sly dog,	Too old to learn new
A hang-dog look,	tricks,
Top dog,	Not to have a word to
Under dog,	throw to a dog.

To "stave off" comes from bear-baiting ; from the use of dogs in hunting and the chase come the following :

To come to heel,	To throw to the pack,
To hold in leash,	To throw off the scent,
To slip the collar,	To make a dead set at,
To give the slip to,	To be on the track
To hound on,	of (?),
To hit it off [the scent],	To keep, or lose, track
To hunt down,	of (?),
To have a good, or bad,	To cover one's tracks (?),
nose for,	In full cry,
To run to earth,	In at the death,
To run with the hare	A red herring,
and hunt with the	Hue and cry.
hounds,	

"At fault," "at a loss," "to cast about," were originally hunting terms referring to the loss of scent ; to "run riot" was to follow any scent without discrimination ; to "run counter" was to follow the scent in the reverse direction, to "hark back" was to return



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and find the scent, to "draw blank" was to find no scent at all. The idiom "at bay," in the phrases to "hold" or "stand at bay," is a half-translation of the old French idioms *tenir à bay*, "to hold in suspense," and *être aux abois*, "to be at close quarters with the barking."

Even more idioms have come to us from horses :

To take the bit in one's teeth,	To go the pace (?),
To come a cropper,	To keep pace with,
To ride to death,	To put through his paces,
To draw up,	To set the pace,
To prick up one's ears,	To pull in, or up,
To gallop through,	To drop the reins,
To turn out to grass,	To give rein, or a loose rein, to,
To have the upper or whip hand of,	To saddle with,
To hold hard,	To put the saddle on the wrong horse,
To eat one's head off,	To sit loosely to (?),
To eat from one's hand (?),	To spur on,
To flog a dead horse,	To win one's spurs,
To give some one his head,	To trot out,
To lock the stable door after the horse is stolen,	At the end of one's tether (?),
To look a gift-horse in the mouth,	In horse-play,
To swap horses while crossing the stream,	In the saddle,
To get on one's hind legs (?),	On the high horse,
To give a leg up,	On the spur of the moment,
	Out of hand,
	With a heavy hand,
	Without turning a hair,
	A horse laugh,
	A mare's nest,
	Heavy in hand,

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Well in hand,	• You can take a horse to
Hairy about the heels,	the water, but you can-
Neck and crop (?),	not make him drink,
My withers are un-	• One man may steal a
wrung,	horse, but another must
The grey mare is the	not look over the hedge,
better horse,	• Money makes the mare go.

To "curry favour," which is one of the oddest of our idioms, was originally to curry "Favel," the fallow-coloured horse—a proverbial type of fraud and cunning.

"To keep to one's own line," "to strike out a new line," "in at the death" or "finish," "to take cover," and perhaps "to come to grief," are idioms from the hunting-field; those from the race-track are more numerous :

To back the wrong	To win at a canter,
horse,	To win hands down,
To carry weight,	To have a run for one's
To curl up,	money,
To give the tip, or a	• From start to finish,
straight tip,	In the running,
To jockey out of,	A dark horse,
To leave at the post,	A dead heat,
To make the running,	A walk over,
To pull it off,	The rest nowhere,
To ride for a fall,	• Neck and neck,
To run hard,	Also ran.
To suit one's book,	

From harnessed horses, from carts and coaches come the following :

To kick over the	• To die in harness,
traces,	• To put the cart before
To work like a horse,	the horse,

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To oil the wheels,	To take the rough with
To put on the brake,	the smooth (?),
To put one's shoulder	To drive a coach and four
to the wheel,	through,
To put a spoke in some	A slow coach,
one's wheel,	*Uphill work,
	At a deadlock (?).

From other tame animals, from cattle, sheep, swine and cats, are derived the following :

### *Cattle*

To kill the fatted calf,	To bull the market,
To chew the cud,	A bull in a china shop,
To herd together,	A red rag to a bull,
To take the bull by the	* A cock and bull story,
horns,	* Calf-love.

### *Cats.*

To put up one's back,	* To have as many lives as
To rub the wrong way,	a cat,
To draw in one's claws,	To have room to swing a
To put out a claw,	cat, <sup>1</sup>
To bell the cat,	A tame cat,
To fight like Kilkenny	* A cat may look at a
cats,	king,
To let the cat out of the	* All cats are grey in the
bag,	dark,
To see how the cat	* Care killed the cat,
jumps,	* When the cat's away the
To have nine lives,	mice will play.

### *Sheep.*

To follow like sheep,	To bear the bell [from
To make sheep's eyes,	the bell-wether],
To look sheepish,	* To fleece some one,

\*<sup>1</sup> Possibly to swing a cat-o'-nine-tails.

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To go wool-gathering,	A black sheep,
To pull the wool over	As meek as a lamb,
some one's eyes,	You might as well be
To tar with the same	hung for a sheep as a
brush [from tarring	lamb.
sheep],	

### *Swine.*

To go the whole hog,	To kick the bucket (i), <sup>1</sup>
To pig it,	To get the wrong sow by
To pig together,	the ear,
To bring one's pigs to	You cannot make a silk
the wrong market,	purse out of a sow's ear,
To buy a pig in a poke,	Please the pigs.

"To rain cats and dogs," "to lead a cat-and-dog life," refer to the traditional enmity between these two domestic animals.

"To make an ass of," "to play the goat," "to butt in," seem to be the only phrases derived from goats and donkeys.

Wild animals have not provided us with many idioms. The phrase "heart of grace" has been explained as "hart of grease," but the explanation is at best a doubtful one. Phrases in which wolves appear, like "to throw to the wolves," "to take the wolf by the ears," are generally of foreign derivation; "to keep the wolf from the door" seems, however, to be an idiom of English origin. Other phrases from wild creatures and their pursuit are the following :

To ferret out,	To sleep like a dor-
To start a hare,	mouse,

<sup>1</sup> It has been alleged, as a possible explanation of this curious idiom, that "bucket" is a name in Norfolk for the beam upon which a pig is suspended after it has been slaughtered. (See *O.E.D.*)

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To run with the hare and hunt with the hounds,	To fall, or walk, into the trap,
To give the go-by [from coursing ?],	To poach on some one's preserve,
As mad as a March hare,	To make a mountain out of a mole-hill,
First catch your hare,	As blind as a mole,
To rat from,	As blind as a bat,
To smell a rat,	As deaf as an adder,
	*As poor as a church mouse.

Wild birds provide more idioms :

*To kill two birds with one stone,	*A bird's-eye view, A swan's song,
*To put salt on a bird's tail,	A wild-geese chase, As the crow flies,
To have a crow to pick with,	At one fell swoop, A little bird told me,
To flutter the dove- cotes,	*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,
To be in fine, or full, or high feather,	*The early bird catches the worm,
To knock some one down with a feather,	*Birds of a feather flock together,
To know a hawk from a handsaw (? hern- shaw),	*Fine feathers make fine birds,
To feather one's nest,	When the sky falls we shall all catch larks,
To foul one's own nest,	One swallow does not make a summer,
To plume oneself upon,	There are no birds in last year's nests,
To scare off (?),	
To clip the wings of,	What a lark !
A bird of passage,	

To "beat about the bush" is from the netting of birds ; the word "toils," in the phrase "taken in

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the toils," means "nets" or "snares," from the French *toiles*, and is not related to "toil" in the sense of work or drudgery.

The following are terms of falconry :

To fly at higher game,	To turn tail,
To fly at a higher pitch,	To have one's gorge rise
To lure away,	at,
To stoop to,	Pride of place.

To be "cock of the walk," "to live like a fighting-cock," "to be game for," "to die game," are phrases from cock-fighting ; from cock-fighting also comes the phrase "to show the white feather," a white feather in the tail of a gamebird being a sign of bad breeding.

From domestic poultry and their eggs come the following :

To be no chicken,	A lame duck,
To count one's chickens before they are hatched,	An ugly duckling,
	A nest egg,
	A bad egg,
To crow over,	As full as an egg,
To cut the comb of,	To walk upon eggs,
To come home to roost,	To have all one's eggs in
To henpeck some one,	one basket,
To take like a duck to water,	To teach one's grandmother to suck eggs,
Like water off a duck's back,	To say "bo" to a goose,
	All his geese are swans.

The curious phrase "to play ducks and drakes with" is a metaphor at two removes : used first for the pastime of skipping flat stones on the surface of the water, it acquired the metaphorical meaning of squandering one's resources.

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Phrases in which snails, worms and insects figure are mostly from old fables, or translated from French :

To go at a snail's pace,	To weave spider's webs,
To draw in one's horns,	In a bee-line,
To bring a hornet's nest about one's ears,	A bee in one's bonnet,
To singe one's wings,	A flea in one's ear,
To strain at a gnat,	A fly on the wheel,
To worm out of,	A wasp's nest,
To break a butterfly on the wheel,	The early bird catches the worm,
	The worm will turn.

Of many of the aspects of wild nature idiom takes no notice ; there are, however, a few phrases derived from woods and trees :

To be out of the wood,	*Through thick and thin
Not to be able to see the wood for the trees,	[thicket and thin wood],
	Up a tree,
	The top of the tree,
To scrape through (?),	*Hearts of oak,
To get into a scrape (?),	Root and branch.
To bow to the storm (?),	

From the wind and rain and weather, from clouds, the sun, the moon and the stars, come the following :

To blow hot and cold,	A bolt from the blue,
To blow over,	*Castles in the air,
To clear the air,	To be in the clouds,
To get the wind up,	To be under a cloud,
To know which way the wind blows,	A break in the clouds,
It's an ill wind that blows nobody good,	*Every cloud has its silver lining,
*Something in the wind,	To throw, or put into the shade,
To praise to the skies,	To leave out in the cold,
Out of the blue,	As right as rain,

## *WORDS AND IDIOMS*

It never rains but it pours,	To have a place in the sun,
Not to know enough to come in when it rains,	To cry for the moon,
Rain or shine,	To shoot the moon,
To snow under,	To think the moon is made of green cheese,
To walk on air,	Once in a blue moon,
In the air,	To bless one's stars,
Under the weather,	To be born under a lucky star,
Like lightning,	His star has set.
To worship the rising sun,	

From other open-air scenes and objects the following are derived :

To suit down to the ground,	*To stand on the edge of a precipice,
To cut the ground from under some one,	To live on the edge of a volcano,
To go downhill,	To dance on a volcano,
To stick in the mud,	To be an extinct volcano,
To be in a hole,	In a cleft stick,
To throw mud at,	In a rut,
To smack of the soil,	On the road to,
*To leave no stone unturned,	A royal road to,
*To be on thorns,	A stone's throw away,
To make one's way,	The beaten way,
To pave the way to,	As cross as two sticks,
To show the way,	As deaf as a post,
To see one's way to,	As dull as ditchwater,
To put in the way of,	As old as the hills,
To explore an avenue,	As steady as a rock,
To take the wrong turning,	It's a long lane that has no turning,
	*A rolling stone gathers no moss.



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To these must be added a number of idioms from farming :

To live in clover,	To put one's hand to the
To lie fallow,	plough,
•To let the grass grow	To take, or strike, root,
under one's feet,	To be on the straw,
To break fresh ground,	Not to care a straw,
To make hay of,	Not to be worth a straw,
•To make hay while the	To thresh out,
sun shines,	Out of heart,
To hedge in,	Under the harrow,
To grasp the nettle,	A long row to hoe,
To sow one's wild oats,	A ring fence around,
To plough the sands,	The lonely furrow.

“To sit on the fence,” “to come down on the right side of the fence,” are idioms from America, where fences take the place of hedges.

There are a few phrases also connected with the fruit and vegetable garden :

To make two bites at a	The apple of discord,
cherry,	The pick of the basket,
To play gooseberry,	Common or garden,
To eat the leek,	Stolen fruit,
To pick and choose (?),	Rotten to the core,
To call a spade a spade,	As cool as a cucumber,
To upset the apple cart,	•As like as two peas.

“Cut and dried” is a phrase from the herbalist's shop : the idioms from the flower garden are not numerous :

To lay up in lavender,	A bed of roses,
To nip in the bud,	A rose between two
To run to seed,	thorns,
To feel, or look, seedy,	•No rose without a thorn,
The pink of,	Under the rose.

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

### VII

There are a number of idioms connected with houses and building, though, save for the phrase "not in the same street with," little that seems definitely derived from life in towns and cities.

To darken the door of,	To drop on like a cart-load
To lay at the door of,	of bricks,
To force an open door,	To lay it on with a
To open the door to,	trowel,
To show the door to,	As safe as houses,
To be at home in,	At death's door,
To bring home to,	By degrees [from steps],
To come home to,	Next door to,
To strike home,	Off its hinges,
To set one's house in	On the threshold of,
order,	On the carpet,
To be able to see	Not right in the upper
through a stone wall,	storey,
To run one's head	*People who live in glass
against a stone wall,	houses [houses with
To throw the house out	glazed windows] should
of the windows,	not throw stones,
To make bricks with-	*Walls have ears.
out straw,	

From the furniture of the house, and from household occupations (other than cooking) come the following :

A skeleton in the cup-	To fall between two
board,	stools,
To be laid on the	To be born on the wrong
shelf,	side of the blanket,
*A peg to hang some-	*To get up on the wrong
thing on,	side of the bed,

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•As a man makes his bed so he must lie on it,	Not to touch with a pair of tongs,
In the twinkling of a bedpost,	To burn the candle at both ends,
Between you and me and the bedpost,	To snuff out,
To bolster up,	Not worth a rush [? from the rushes on the floor which preceded carpets]
To give a curtain lecture,	A new broom,
To put back the clock,	A clean sweep,
To go like clock-work,	New brooms sweep clean,
To get on like one o'clock,	A drop in the bucket,
The swing of the pendulum,	To wash one's dirty linen in public,
As stiff as a poker,	To throw out the baby with the bath,
As right as a trivet,	That won't wash,
	To sponge on.

Homely phrases from the kitchen, kitchen utensils, and figures and images from cooking are vivid and numerous :

To boil down,	To put the lid on,
To boil over,	To make mincemeat of,
To make the pot boil,	Not to mince matters,
To keep the pot boiling,	To have a rod in pickle,
To bubble over with (?),	To have a finger in the pie, or every pie,
To butter up,	To go to pot,
To have other fish to fry,	To skim off,
To cook some one's goose for him,	To be in a stew,
To settle some one's hash,	To stew in one's own juice,
To make hash of,	To have on toast,
	To be half-baked,
	In apple-pie order,

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

In hot water,	The pot calls the kettle
Out of the frying-pan	black,
into the fire,	Done to a turn [of the
The fat is on the fire,	spit].

Idioms derived from fire may be conveniently added here, although they are by no means all connected with the kitchen fire :

To catch, or take fire,	To flame up,
To play with fire,	To add fuel to the flame,
To set fire to,	To burst into flame,
To set on fire,	To burn one's fingers,
To strike fire,	To go up in smoke,
To go through fire and	To end in smoke,
water,	To stamp out,
To heap coals of fire on,	To throw a wet blanket
To get on like a house	on,
afire,	To throw cold water on,
To set the Thames on	On fire,
fire,	*No smoke without a fire.

Many figurative phrases come from food and eating :

To bite off more than	To look as if butter
one can chew,	would not melt in one's
To make no bones of,	mouth,
To make one's bread by,	To share one's last crust
*To take the bread out	with,
of some one's mouth,	To take the cake,
To quarrel with one's	To sell like hot cakes,
bread and butter,	To cut and come again,
To have one's bread	To eat dirt,
buttered on both	To be neither fish, flesh
sides,	nor good red herring,
To know on which side	To fork out,
one's bread is but-	To take the gilt off the
tered,	gingerbread,

## ENGLISH IDIOMS

To live from hand to mouth,	To be given the cold shoulder [? of mutton],
To catch it hot (?),	To be in the soup,
To be meat and drink to,	To be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth,
To eat humble pie,	To make a spoon and spoil a horn,
To keep one's breath to cool one's porridge,	In a nutshell,
To drop like a hot potato,	A hard nut to crack,
To take pot-luck,	The cream of,
To take with a grain of salt,	Hot and hot,
To be not worth one's salt,	One's daily bread,
	As different as chalk from cheese.

“To cry over spilt milk,” is perhaps a phrase originating with the female thinkers of the kitchen, who have expressed much profound wisdom and observation in a large number of kitchen proverbs :

You cannot eat your cake and have it ;  
 Half a loaf is better than no bread ;  
 Enough is as good as a feast ;  
 Hunger is the best sauce ;  
 The proof of the pudding is in the eating ;  
 What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander ;  
 One man's meat is another man's poison ;  
 Fine words butter no parsnips ;  
 A watched pot never boils ;  
 Let not the pot call the kettle black ;  
 Too many cooks spoil the broth ;  
 The burnt child dreads the fire ;  
 He needs a long spoon who would sup with the Devil ;  
 Little pitchers have long ears ;  
 Every tub must stand on its own bottom ;  
 You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

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Drinking, curiously enough, is less fertile in idiom ; phrases and reflections from the tavern are scanty and thin, lacking in depth of thought, compared with the apophthegms of the kitchen.

To set abroach,	To think no small beer of,
To be on tap,	To knock under, <sup>1</sup>
To drain to the lees,	To ladle out,
To draw it mild,	To water down,
To bottle up,	To be cocksure, <sup>2</sup>
To chronicle small beer,	A half-way house, Mischief is brewing,

are phrases which come to us from the public-house, or from liquor brewed and consumed at home. "That life is not all beer and skittles," and that it is folly to cast up one's own account for oneself, or to "reckon without one's host," are bits, however, of wisdom from the tavern which in fairness should not be omitted. From tobacco we have the phrase "up to snuff," and the not very polite injunction "put that in your pipe and smoke it." From tea-drinking comes the metaphor of "a storm in a tea-cup."

More numerous are the figurative phrases derived from the mill, the blacksmith's shop, from handicrafts, and the use of various tools :

To put through the mill,	To bring grist to the mill,
To see through a mill-stone,	All is grist that comes to the mill,

<sup>1</sup> From "to knock underboard," *i.e.* to succumb in a drinking-bout. (*O.E.D.*)

<sup>2</sup> Probably referring to the security or certainty of the action of a cock or tap in preventing the escape of liquor. (*Ibid.*)

## ENGLISH IDIOMS

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|--|---|
| • To strike while the iron is hot,           | Not to put too fine a point on,                     |
| • To have too many irons in the fire,        | To give a handle to,                                |
| To hammer out,                               | To get the hang of [a tool],                        |
| To go at it hammer and tongs,                | To be not fit to hold a candle to (?), <sup>1</sup> |
| Between hammer and anvil,                    | To be on tenterhooks [for stretching cloth],        |
| On the anvil,                                | To hammer at,                                       |
| In a white heat,                             | To hammer an idea into some one's head,             |
| In full blast,                               | To hit the nail on the head,                        |
| To throw on the scrap-heap [of scrap-iron],  | As hard as nails,                                   |
| To put in the melting-pot,                   | As dead as a doornail,                              |
| To have an axe to grind,                     | A nail in one's coffin,                             |
| • To keep some one's nose to the grindstone, | • One nail drives out another,                      |
| A chip of the old block,                     | To stick to one's last,                             |
| To throw the helve after the hatchet,        | To sift out,  |
| To take the edge off (?),                    | To put through the sieve,                           |
| To blunt the edge of (?),                    | The thin end of the wedge,                          |
| To play with edged tools,                    | The entering wedge,                                 |
|  | • A square peg in a round hole,                     |
|  | To clinch the matter,                               |
|  | To screw up one's courage,                          |
|  | To be in a groove.                                  |

From the implements of sewing, from pinning and stitching and mending, are derived the following phrases :

- |                                       |                             |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • To look for a needle in a haystack, | To be as sharp as a needle, |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

<sup>1</sup> Probably from holding a candle to some one to assist him in his work.

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|--|---|
| <p>• To be on pins and needles,<br/>         To pin down,<br/>         • Not to care a pin for,<br/>         Not to be worth a row of pins,<br/>         To be at a loose end,<br/>         To lose the thread of,</p> | <p>To take up the thread of,<br/>         To be not a patch upon,<br/>         To take a ply from (?),<br/>         The seamy side,<br/>         • A stitch in time saves nine.</p> |
|--|---|

Machinery and more modern implements have not given rise to many idioms. The current expression "fed up" is probably derived from the "feeding" of agricultural machines; other modern expressions are "to get up steam," "to blow off steam," "to shut off steam," "to have a screw loose," "to reverse the engine," "to throw out of gear." Mines have added a few idioms to the language, "to crop up," "to crop out," "to pan out," "to peter out," "to peg out," "to get down to bed-rock."

It will have been seen how largely our figurative and idiomatic phrases are of popular origin, are drawn from the interests and occupations of humble life. The phrase-making, like the word-making, faculty belongs pre-eminently to the unlettered classes, and our best idioms, like our most vivid and living words, come to us, not from the library or the drawing-room or the "gay parterre," but from the workshop, the kitchen and the farm-yard.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An immense number of picturesque images and local idioms are collected in the *English Dialect Dictionary*; it is a mine full of the golden ore of language.



## ENGLISH IDIOMS

### VIII

Popular sports have given rise also to a number of idioms. "To hit, or miss, the mark," "to go beyond the mark," "to be beside the mark," are probably from archery : more certainly from this source are the following :

To draw the long bow,	To let fly,
To draw the bow at a venture,	To have shot one's bolt,
To have two strings to one's bow,	To the top of one's bent,
	A fool's bolt is soon shot.

To "try a fall," to "catch tripping," to "have some one on the hip," and also, perhaps, "to wipe the floor with," come from wrestling contests. The idioms from pugilism are more numerous :

To bring to the scratch,	To knock out,
To chuck, or throw up the sponge,	To polish off,
To clear the ring,	To take it lying down (?),
To come up smiling (?),	Up to the scratch,
To double up,	Straight from the shoulder,
To hit out,	A facer,
To hit below the belt,	Rough and tumble,
	Down and out (?).

A large number of idioms have been derived from various games. Some, like "to play fair," "to play the game," "two can play at that game," "the looker on sees most of the game," cannot be traced with certainty to any special form of game ; in others, like "to play hide and seek with," "to sleep like a top,"

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the source of origin is more obvious. "From pillar to post" (originally "from post to pillar") comes from Court-tennis; the phrase "there's the rub" from Bowls; "to knuckle under," "to knuckle down" are from Marbles. To "put on side," "to play for safety," are from Billiards; "not by a long chalk" is derived from the use of chalk in the scoring of various contests. "To take up the cudgels" is from Cudgel-play. "To have the ball at one's feet," "to keep the ball rolling," are phrases from some kind of Football. The vocabulary of Cricket is rich in technical phrases, and a number of these have been adopted, with figurative meanings, into the general vocabulary :

To be bowled over,	To back up,
To be bowled out,	To catch out,
To have one's innings,	To stop the rot,
To play off one's own bat,	To score heavily (?),
To keep one's end up,	It isn't cricket.

The process of giving figurative meanings to technical terms, and assimilating them into colloquial speech seems to require time. It is only the old and long-established sports which have enriched the common vocabulary; from more recent sports and games, from Lawn-tennis and Golf, from Bicycling, Motoring, and Aviation, though each of these has its special vocabulary, few or no idioms have acquired wider meanings.<sup>1</sup>

Card-games have been played in England for many

<sup>1</sup> "To toe the mark," however, and "to get one's second wind," are probably from our modern athletic contests.

## ENGLISH IDIOMS

centuries, and from these and other forms of indoor games are derived the following phrases :

To sweep the board,	To have the game in one's hands,
To be above-board,	
To have a card up one's sleeve,	To play a deep, a winning, or a losing game,
To hold the trump card,	To spoil some one's game,
To pack the cards against,	To force the hand of,
To play one's cards badly,	To play into the hands of,
To play one's last card,	To follow suit,
To put one's cards on the table,	To stand pat [from Poker],
To show one's cards, or one's hand,	To turn up trumps,
To give points to,	The game is up,
To score off,	The game is not worth the candle,
	A house of cards.

"On the cards" is probably from fortune-telling by means of cards. "To hold in check," "to make a good, or bad move," come from Chess; "to leave in the lurch" is from the old game of *Lourche*, resembling Backgammon, and the phrase "to turn the tables" comes from games of this kind.

From dicing and from gambling and games of chance are derived the following :

To be at stake,	To play with loaded dice,
To play one's last stake,	
To have a stake in,	To bank on,
To have an eye to the main chance,	To be no great shakes (?).

The noun *by*, in the phrase "by the by" has been explained as being originally a dicing term, and the

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

word "deuce" for the throw of two, enters into many phrases, and is often used as a euphemism for the Devil. "To foist upon," "to play fast and loose" are from some old forms of cheating games.

### IX

The arts provide a certain number of idioms, especially the arts of music and dancing, but they are drawn for the most part from the popular forms of these entertainments :

To play first, or second, fiddle,	To buy for an old song, To ring the changes on,
To be as fit as a fiddle,	In tune,
To harp on (the same string),	Out of tune,
To blow one's own trumpet,	To the tune of, As sound as a bell,
To sing small,	To open the ball,
To sing to another tune,	To dance attendance,
To change one's tune, or note,	To lead the dance, To lead some one a dance,
To pay the piper (and call the tune),	To lead up to, To lead off.

More definitely polite are the idioms which have been derived from painting, and from the theatre :

#### *Painting.*

To tone down,	In, or out of, keeping,
To touch up,	A blot on the landscape,
To touch in,	The dark side of the picture,
To put the finishing touches to,	Not so black as he is painted.
To draw the line (?)	
To rub in (?),	

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### *Theatre.*

To fill the bill,	To act a part,
To be in, or out of,	To be behind the scenes,
character,	To shift the scene,
To give the cue for,	To make a scene,
To ring down the	To be in the limelight,
curtain,	To pull the strings, or
To be before the foot-	wires,
lights,	The scene of action,
To play to the gallery,	A change of scene,
To face the music (?),	A stage whisper.

There are two expressive idioms from the theatre, "to put it over," "to get it across," which are now popular in America, and which will probably soon make their way into our speech in England. The phrases "a side-show," "to run the show," "to give the show away," "to dance on a tight-rope," are from popular shows. "To bring down the house" is from the theatre, or perhaps from public meetings. "To take the floor," and the American phrase, "to take a back seat" are, with "the order of the day," also from public meetings; "it's all over but the shouting," is an echo from popular elections.

Of the learned professions, that of Medicine has given rise to the following phrases :

To doctor something,	To take the temperature
To kill or cure,	of,
To take one's own	To feel the pulse of,
medicine,	A bitter pill to swallow,
To gild, or sugar, the	A fly in the ointment,
pill,	A good dose of,
To swallow the pill,	A dose of his own medi-
To sweeten the draught,	cine.

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The following phrases are legal in their origin :

To have neither art nor part in,	To pay one's scot,
To take one's Bible oath,	To plead guilty to,
To go bail for,	To sit on,
To hold a brief for,	At issue,
To make out one's case,	In malice prepense,
To outrun the constable,	A matter of fact,
To laugh out of court,	A moot point,
To put out of court,	The merits of the case,
To join issue with,	Null and void,
To raise, or shirk, the issue,	Scot and lot,
To lay down the law,	Scot free,
To leave a loophole (?),	Special pleading,
	Possession is nine points of the law.

Terms of business are, as we might expect, numerous in the speech of a mercantile and shopkeeping nation. Some of these are derived from simple forms of barter, others from wholesale business and the Stock Exchange :

To hold the balance,	To give a blank cheque
To strike a balance,	to,
To turn the balance,	To chop and change,
To weigh in the balance,	To raise, or lower, the credit of,
To strike a bargain,	To do a deal with,
To get more than one bargained for,	To queer the pitch [? place of sale],
To make the best of a bad bargain,	To turn the scales,
To send someone about his business,	To score up against,
To make capital of,	To talk shop,
	To shut up shop,
	To be sold,

## ENGLISH IDIOMS

To take stock of,	A bad bargain,
To have no truck with,	A heavy bill to pay,
To trade on,	An ugly customer,
To bring to terms,	A drug on the market,
At a discount,	A large, or tall, order,
At a premium,	A turn over,
Below par,	The hall-mark of,
In the balance,	Dirt cheap,
Into the bargain,	Damaged goods,
On the score of,	Plain as a pike-staff [pack-
Out of sorts,	staff].

The word "lot" is an auctioneer's or shopkeeper's term, and appears in the phrases "lots" of, "a bad lot." The word "account" (earlier "accompt") is a business word which has entered into a number of idioms, many of which are to be traced, with more or less certainty, to a commercial origin :

To bring to account,	To render an account,
To call to account,	To take into account,
To turn to account,	On account of,
To find one's account	On one's own account,
in,	On no account.
To leave out of account,	

"To hang out" is, perhaps, derived from the hanging out of shop signs ; "up the spout" comes from the lift, so-called, up which pawned articles were sent for storage. "To nail to the counter" is derived from the old custom of nailing bad coins to the counter. Coins and metals appear in the following :

• To pay some one back	To turn up, like a bad
in his own coin,	penny,
To turn an honest	To cut off with a
penny,	shilling,

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To pay some one back in his own coin,	A penny for your thoughts, Penny wise, pound foolish,
Not to care a rap [a small Irish coin],	A penny dreadful, A penny-a-liner,
Not to be able to make heads or tails of,	A shilling shocker, To ring false, or true,
In for a penny, in for a pound,	Not worth a brass farthing, To be worth one's weight in gold.
A pretty penny,	

"To put to the test," or "to the touch," comes from testing precious metals. From diamonds come the phrases, "of the first water," "eighteen carat," and "diamond cut diamond."

"Up to date" was originally a book-keeping term, meaning "entered up to date." "To bring to book," to be in a person's "good" or "black books," are phrases perhaps of commercial, perhaps of legal origin. From other kinds of books, from newspapers, and from reading, come the following :

To speak by the book,	To read a lecture to,
To speak like a book,	To read between the lines,
To give chapter and verse,	To speak volumes for, To spell ruin,
To turn over a new leaf,	A dead letter, A back number,
To take a leaf out of some one's book,	A good press, A chapter of accidents,
To gloss over,	To the end of the chapter.

"To play truant," "out of bounds," "to put to school to," "to give a bad mark to," "to tell tales out of school," "to mind one's P's and Q's," "to dot one's I's," "to put a period to," "to smell of the



## ENGLISH IDIOMS

lamp," "without rhyme or reason," are phrases derived from schools, or from writing and literary composition.

Geography and History play little part in idiom, but the names of places and foreign nations appear in the following :

To talk Billingsgate,	To talk double Dutch,
To be shipshape and Bristol fashion,	To take French leave, <sup>1</sup>
To grin like a Cheshire cat,	Dutch courage,
To fight like Kilkenny cats,	To do at Rome as Rome does,
To send to Coventry,	Rome was not built in a day,
To beat the Dutch,	All roads lead to Rome.

"A bear garden," "to see the lions," embody relics of old London. "True blue" comes from the times of the Covenanters, who adopted blue as their colour in contradistinction to the royal red, and "a crowning mercy" was Cromwell's description of his victory at Worcester.

## X

Old religious allusions linger on in the phrases :

To haul over the coals,	To die in the odour of sanctity, <sup>2</sup>
To curse with book, bell and candle,	To do penance,

<sup>1</sup> The same meaning is expressed by *filer à l'anglaise* in French.

<sup>2</sup> From the French *odeur de sainteté*, the sweet odour stated to be exhaled by the bodies of saints at their deaths or on subsequent disinterment (*O.E.D.*).

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

To rob Peter to pay Paul,	On the rack,
To put the screw on,	Not a penny to bless one's self with,
To give short shrift to,	Not fit to hold a candle to.
To go to the stake for,	

The phrase "to save the mark" (from "God bless," or "save the mark") comes probably from an old formula for averting an evil omen. "A month's mind," common in Ireland and in English dialects, meant originally the commemoration of a deceased person by saying masses a month after his death.

"To take for gospel," "to give chapter and verse," are probably Protestant idioms; the curious phrasal verb "to hold forth" originated among the Non-conformists at the time of the Commonwealth, as a more or less cant term for preaching.<sup>1</sup>

The Parson makes no appearance in idiomatic speech, but the Devil, or his euphemistic substitute, the Deuce, plays an active and important part.

To beat the Devil round the bush,	The Devil a one,
To give the Devil his due,	The Devil to pay,
To shame the Devil,	The Devil take it,
To show the cloven hoof,	The Devil take the hindmost,
To play the deuce with,	The Devil is not so black as he is painted,
Between the Devil and the deep sea,	The deuce is in it,
The Devil and all,	The deuce knows,
	Where the deuce,
	As the Devil loves Holy Water,

<sup>1</sup> To "hold forth" seems to be a translation of *ἐπὶ ῥήματα* in the Greek Testament, *Phil.* ii. 16 (*O.E.D.*).

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It's the very Devil,	He needs a long spoon who
Like to the Devil,	would sup with the Devil,
He needs must go that	Talk of the Devil, and he
the Devil drives,	is sure to appear,
	A printer's devil.

The phrase "much cry and little wool" comes from an old legend of the Devil shearing hogs; the origin of the phrase "pull Devil, pull baker" is not known.

The immense influence on our language of the English translations of the Bible has often been remarked on; for centuries the Bible has been the book which has been most read and most quoted in England; not only many words, but many idiomatic phrases (often the literal translations of Hebrew or Greek idioms) have been added to our language from its pages. Indeed, so numerous are the Biblical phrases which have entered into the texture of our speech, that it would be a labour of some difficulty to collect and enumerate them all. Among those of which the Biblical origin is most obvious are:

Apples of Sodom,	Safe and sound,
Balm in Gilead,	Vials of wrath,
Bowels of mercy,	All things to all men,
Deep calling to deep,	Daily bread,
Fear and trembling,	*Egyptian darkness,
Feet of clay,	Filthy lucre,
Gall and wormwood,	New wine in old bottles,
Line upon line,	No respecter of persons,
Lines fallen in pleasant	Not a jot or a tittle,
places,	Weighed in the balance,
Loaves and fishes,	Whited sepulchres,
Milk and honey,	*A broken reed,
Sackcloth and ashes,	A cloud of witnesses,

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A crown of glory,	• The good Samaritan,
A drop in the bucket,	• The handwriting on the wall,
An eye for an eye,	The Holy of Holies,
A fly in the ointment,	The law of the Medes and Persians,
A howling wilderness,	The Mammon of unrighteousness,
A labour of love,	The little leaven that leavens the whole lump,
A lion in the way,	• The old Adam,
An olive branch,	The old leaven,
A proverb and a by-word,	The prodigal son,
A soft answer,	The promised land,
A stirring of the waters,	The root of all evil,
A thorn in the flesh,	The root of the matter,
A tinkling cymbal,	• The salt of the earth,
A voice in the wilderness,	• The shadow of death,
A wolf in sheep's clothing,	• The sweat of one's brow,
A word in season,	• The wages of sin,
The apple of the eye,	• The weaker vessel,
The beam, the mote in the eye,	The widow's cruse,
The blind leading the blind,	The wings of the wind,
The breath of the nostrils,	The writing on the wall,
The burden and the heat of the day,	Their name is legion,
The camel and the needle's eye,	• After one's own heart,
The children of this world,	As one man,
The chosen people,	In the flesh,
The eleventh hour,	In the land of the living,
The flesh-pots of Egypt,	• In the twinkling of an eye,
The gift of tongues,	Of the earth, earthy,
	Off the face of the earth,
	With clean hands,

## ENGLISH IDIOMS

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|--|--|
| <p>A prophet is not without honour save in his own country,<br/>         • The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,<br/>         • Can the leopard change his spots?<br/>         • Whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap,<br/>         • Evil communications corrupt good manners,</p> | <p>If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?<br/>         In vain is the net spread in the sight of the bird,<br/>         • No man can serve two masters,<br/>         • Pride goes before a fall,<br/>         Quit yourselves like men, With the pure, all things are pure.</p> |
|--|--|

In addition to these substantive, adjectival, adverbial and proverbial phrases, many verbal idioms come to us from the Bible :

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>• To beat the air,<br/>         To entertain an angel unawares,<br/>         To draw a bow at a venture,<br/>         To cast one's bread upon the waters,<br/>         To make bricks without straw,<br/>         • To kill the fatted calf,<br/>         To worship the golden calf,<br/>         To turn the other cheek,<br/>         To darken counsel,<br/>         To take counsel,<br/>         To bear one's cross,<br/>         To shake off the dust of one's feet,<br/>         • To have itching ears,</p> | <p>To spoil the Egyptians,<br/>         To see eye to eye with,<br/>         To grind the faces of the poor,<br/>         To set one's face against,<br/>         To find favour with,<br/>         To heap coals of fire on,<br/>         • To answer a fool according to his folly,<br/>         To strain at a gnat,<br/>         To fall on stony ground,<br/>         To serve God and Mammon,<br/>         To wash one's hands of,<br/>         To search the heart,<br/>         To smite hip and thigh,<br/>         To proclaim from the house-tops,<br/>         To set one's house in order,</p> |
|--|---|

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• To go to Jericho,	To call in question,
To bow the knee to,	To bow down in the house
To hide one's light	of Rimmon,
under a bushel,	• To spare the rod,
To gird up one's loins,	To be built upon sand,
To have no lot or part	• To laugh to scorn,
in,	To give short shrift to,
To cast in one's lot	To change one's skin,
with,	To possess one's soul in
To have some one's	patience,
mantle fall upon,	To cast the first stone,
To fill up the measure	To beat swords into
of,	ploughshares,
To be of one mind,	To escape by the skin of
To condemn some one	one's teeth,
out of his own	To go from strength to
mouth,	strength,
To take some one's	To gnash the teeth,
name in vain,	To sit under one's vine
To cast pearls before	and fig-tree,
swine,	• To lift up one's voice,
To dig a pit for,	To return to one's vomit,
To touch pitch,	To turn one's face to the
To have pity on,	wall,
To put one's hand to	• To sow the wind and reap
the plough,	the whirlwind,
To kick against the	To spare one's words,
pricks,	To be at ease in Zion.

"Forbidden fruit," "Job's comforters," "a Judas kiss," "a dead letter," are phrases which contain Biblical allusions.

To "hope against hope" is an adaptation of "who against hope believed in hope" (*Rom. iv. 18*), and "wheels within wheels" probably comes from the

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phrase in Ezekiel, "A wheel in the middle of a wheel" (i. 16). Some of these phrases have acquired meanings which are due to misunderstanding, and are different from the real meanings of the phrases in scripture.<sup>1</sup>

The phrases "from the bottom of the heart," "for better, for worse," "to have and to hold," "poms and vanity," "the world, the flesh and the devil," come from the Book of Common Prayer.

### XI

After the Bible, Shakespeare's plays are, as we might expect, the richest literary source of English idioms, and the following phrases are familiar to us from Shakespeare :

* To make assurance double sure,	To wear one's heart on one's sleeve,
To chronicle small beer,	To out-Herod Herod,
* To cudgel one's brains,	To have on the hip,
To speak by the card,	To eat out of house and home,
* To screw one's courage to the sticking-point,	To eat the leek,
* To speak daggers,	* To win golden opinions,
To give the Devil his due,	To give pause to,
To flutter the dove- cotes,	To be hoist with one's own petard,
To gild refined gold,	* To do yeoman service,
To know a hawk from a handsaw,	To shuffle off,
	To lay it on with a trowel,
	To lay the flattering unction to one's soul,

<sup>1</sup> "To see eye to eye with," "to be of one mind with," etc.  
See Bradley, *Making of English*, p. 225.

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Cakes and ale,	The cry is still they
Caviare to the general,	come,
Fancy free,	The head and front of,
Hit or miss,	*The milk of human
Metal more attractive,	kindness,
Pride of place,	The green-eyed monster,
Sermons in stones,	The glimpses of the moon,
Shreds and patches,	The observed of all
Sweets to the sweet,	observers,
Trifles light as air,	The pity of it,
Curled darlings,	The pound of flesh,
Every inch a king,	The primrose path,
Full of sound and fury,	The seamy side,
Germane to the matter,	The sere and yellow leaf,
Good men and true,	The whirligig of time,
*Midsummer madness,	The wish is father to the
*Moving accidents,	thought,
*Neither rhyme nor	The world's mine oyster,
reason,	That's flat,
Ocular proof,	That way madness lies,
One touch of nature,	There's the rub,
Salad days,	As good luck would have
A coign of vantage,	it,
A foregone conclusion,	At one fell swoop,
A Daniel come to	From whose bourne no
judgement,	traveller returns,
A fool's paradise,	How the world wags,
An itching palm,	In the mind's eye,
A sea-change,	In good set terms,
A Triton among min-	In the vein for,
nows,	Of pith and moment,
A towering passion,	*To the heart's content,
A tower of strength,	To the manner born,
*The be-all and end-all,	To the top of one's bent,
The beginning of the	*With bated breath,
end,	Comparisons are odorous,



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More sinned against    My gorge rises at it,  
than sinning,            Our withers are unwrung.

The phrase "to scotch, not kill a snake" comes from Theobald's generally accepted emendation of "scotch'd" for "scorch'd" in *Macbeth* (III. ii. 13).

Phrases like these are more than mere quotations; the verbs are conjugated, the other words varied to suit our needs, and we use them often with no definite consciousness of their origin. They have, as Dr. Bradley puts it, "entered into the texture of the diction of literature and daily conversation," and may now "fairly be regarded as idioms of the English language."

While, however, these expressions are familiar to us from Shakespeare's writings, it by no means follows that they are all of his invention; his plays are full of tags from popular speech; the phrase "there's the rub" for instance, comes, as we have seen, from the game of bowls; the idiom, "out of joint," has been found three hundred years before the date of Hamlet, and the phrase "much ado," appears in Coverdale's translation of the Bible. But many of the other phrases seem to bear the stamp of his invention, and considering how few other writers have added idioms to the language, it is a surprising proof, both of his linguistic genius and his popularity, that so great a number of familiar locutions are derived from his plays.

Our memories are stored with quotations from other famous English writers, but these, with very few exceptions, remain quotations, and are not fused as idioms into our colloquial speech. The phrase "my better half" (itself an echo of Horace) is first found

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in Sidney's *Arcadia*, and from Milton<sup>1</sup> come a few expressions like "confusion worse confounded," and "a dim religious light," which may be considered as hovering on the borderland between idiom and quotation. "Vanity Fair," "The Slough of Despond," "The man with the muckrake," are from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. "To steal some one's thunder," is said to have originated from a protest of the critic and dramatist John Dennis, who had invented for a play of his own a new kind of artificial thunder, which, after the failure of his play, was used for a performance of *Macbeth*. "See how the rascals use me!" he rose in the pit and exclaimed with an oath, "they will not let my play run; and yet they steal my thunder!"<sup>2</sup> "When Greek meets Greek," is a misquotation of Nathaniel Lee's line:

"When Greeks joyn'd Greeks, then was the tug  
of War."

"Sweetness and light" is a phrase of Swift's made current by Matthew Arnold, and Browning's title *The Blot on the Scutcheon* was probably derived from Dryden's phrase, "a blot on his escutcheon." "To fly off at a tangent," is found in *Humphrey Clinker*. "Leather and prunella" is from Pope's *Essay on Man*; "the madding crowd" from Gray's *Elegy*. "To teach the young idea how to shoot" is a line of Thom-

<sup>1</sup> The proverb "every cloud has its silver lining," which can hardly be of popular origin, may possibly derive from the lines in *Comas*:

"Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?"

<sup>2</sup> *Biog. Brit.* vol. v. p. 103.

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son's which has almost become an idiom of our language, and the phrase "to swim into one's ken," from the famous sonnet of Keats, is undergoing the same process. The same may be said of the line, "to make the punishment fit the crime," from Gilbert's *Mikado*. "To be on the side of the angels" is a saying made popular by Disraeli; "to drop the pilot" comes from a well-known cartoon in *Punch*; and during the late war, the phrase "one's spiritual home" became famous under circumstances familiar to us all. "Dead Sea fruit" sounds like a phrase from the Bible, but it is first found as the title of a novel of Miss Braddon's. Save perhaps for a few phrases like "on one's native heath" from *Rob Roy*, "to beard the lion in his den," from *Marmion*, Tennyson's "rift within the lute," Emerson's "man in the street,"<sup>1</sup> and "hitch your wagon to a star," Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and Dickens's "King Charles's head," and "in a Pickwickian sense," it is difficult to find any idioms derived from nineteenth-century writers. It is possible to invent a new word, it is possible to write a line of poetry which will go to increase the stock of English quotations, but to add a new idiom to the language seems almost to require powers such as were only possessed by Shakespeare—by Shakespeare, and by thousands of illiterate men and women whose names will never be known.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This, however, seems to have been originally a racing-term. The *O.E.D.* quotes from the *Greville Memoirs* (1831), "'The man in the street' (as we call him at Newmarket)."

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "Bag and baggage," is generally supposed to originate in a famous speech of Gladstone's about the Turks clearing "bag and baggage" out of a European province.

XII

To return, however, to idioms from foreign sources. In addition to the oriental idioms from the Bible, our language contains a large deposit of proverbs, gnomic phrases and figurative expressions which have been handed down from classical times, and borrowed and adopted into the speech of those European nations which share in the common inheritance of Greek and Latin culture.

"The Golden Age," "the apple of discord," "Pandora's box," come from Greek mythology; and echoes from Homer are found in the following:

Homeric laughter,	* Between Scylla and Cha-
An Iliad of woes,	rybdis,
A sardonic laugh,	* On the knees of the
Penelope's web,	Gods,
Winged words,	* On the razor's edge.

"A Pyrrhic victory," "the Gordian knot," "the sword of Damocles," "to hang by a thread," "to

It is, however, an old military phrase, dating from the sixteenth century. "The skeleton in the cupboard" was given currency by Thackeray, but, the *Oxford Dictionary* says, was known at an earlier date. "Wait and see" is a phrase which is found in Defoe, and was used by Dickens. Three idioms are attributed by tradition to words spoken by three great men. "The iron hand in the velvet glove" is supposed to be a phrase of the Emperor Charles V.; William of Orange is said to have expressed his determination to "die in the last ditch," rather than witness the overthrow of the Dutch Commonwealth; and that remarkable old man, Thomas Hobbes, is reported to have said, as his last words, that he was about "to take a great leap in the dark"—thus enriching the language with an idiom on his deathbed.

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appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober," are from Greek history and legend. The "unwritten law" is a phrase of Solon's; "to hand on the torch," "to sacrifice to the Graces" and "Platonic love" are from Plato's writings; "to beg the question" is from Aristotle, who also quotes the Greek proverb, "One swallow does not make a summer," and "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." The following are from Æsop, or from other Greek fables :

To blow hot and cold,	To cry wolf too often,
To add insult to injury,	The lion's share,
To kill the goose that	The last straw [that
laid the golden eggs,	broke the camel's
To nourish a viper in	back],
one's bosom,	Sour grapes.

"To take time by the forelock," is from an illustration to Phædrus; "the smell of the lamp," "to know where the shoe pinches" are phrases familiar to us from Plutarch; the "skeleton at the feast" is from his account of the ancient Egyptians, and the idiom "to call a spade a spade" is a happy mistranslation, due to Erasmus, of an expression which Plutarch quotes, meaning "to call a tub a tub," or something of that kind. Euclid created an idiom when he warned the king of Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus, that there was no "royal road" to geometry. "The dog in the manger" is from Lucian; other idioms of Greek origin are "a swan's song" "to burn one's boats," "to leave no stone unturned," "to write in water," and to "take the wolf by the ears."

"To cross the Rubicon," and "the die is cast," are from Caesar's advance on Rome. "A snake in the

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grass," and "a sop to Cerberus" are Virgilian phrases; "a purple patch" is from Horace, "the sinews of war" from Cicero; "better late than never" is found in Livy, and "a pious fraud" in Ovid; the phrases "with a grain of salt" and "in a nutshell" are from the elder Pliny's writings.<sup>1</sup> "The burden of proof" is a translation of the Law Latin *onus probandi*. "To plough the sand," "to give the palm to," "to bear the palm," "to put off to the Greek Kalends," "to stick to one's last," and "the horn of plenty," are other idioms which come to us from Latin. Our phrase, "a storm in a tea-cup" is perhaps an adaptation of the Latin *excitare fluctus in simpulo*, found in Cicero.

The culture shared by most European countries in the Middle Ages has left in our language a large deposit of figurative and proverbial phrases. "The horns of a dilemma" come from the scholastic *argumentum cornutum*; "a Roland for an Oliver" is from the *Chanson de Roland*; "to make a catpaw of" is from an Italian tale of the fifteenth century; "to bell the cat," "the whole bag of tricks," "borrowed plumes," are from medieval fables. The phrases "to lick into shape," and an "unlicked cub" are derived from the notion of European folk-lore that bears give form to their cubs in this manner; "to hide one's head in the sand" is from the supposed behaviour of embarrassed ostriches; "crocodile's tears" comes from the belief that crocodiles shed tears while eating human beings.

The following figurative and proverbial phrases are

<sup>1</sup> See Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte*.

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found not only in English, but in French, and many of them in other European languages as well :

### *Nautical.*

To swim against the current,	To break the ice,
To lower one's flag,	To fish in troubled waters.

### *Military.*

To be under arms,	To throw down the glove,
To lay down arms,	To enter the lists,
To mask one's batteries,	To break a lance for,
To return to the charge,	To win one's spurs,
To gain ground,	A running fire,
To beat a retreat,	At daggers drawn,
	At the sword's point.

### *Animals and birds and insects.*

To take the bull by the horns,	When the cat's away the mice will play,
To take the bit in one's teeth,	To start a hare,
To lock the stable door after the horse is stolen,	To walk upon eggs,
To eat from the hand of,	To put all one's eggs in one basket,
All cats are grey in the dark,	A bird of passage,
	A hornet's nest,
	A flea in the ear,
	A fly on the wheel.

### *Open air and agriculture.*

A place in the sun, <sup>1</sup>	To take root,
The beaten road,	To run to seed,
To make one's way,	To smack of the soil,
To show the way,	On the straw,
To be on thorns,	A man of straw.

<sup>1</sup> This famous phrase is first found in Pascal's *Pensées*.

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### *The House and Workshop.*

On the carpet,	To play with fire,
A new broom,	To strike while the iron is
As a man makes his bed,	hot,
so he must lie on it,	To be between anvil and
To draw a curtain,	hammer,
To make the pot boil,	To throw the helve after
To take pot-luck,	the hatchet.

### *'Games, Professions, Arts and Trade.*

To play with one's	To swallow the pill,
cards on the table,	To pull the strings,
To force some one's	To change one's note,
hand,	To read between the lines,
The game is not worth	To put the dots on one's I's,
the candle,	A dead letter,
A house of cards,	Neither rhyme nor reason,
To gild the pill,	To hold the balance.

### *Idioms from the Human Body.*

To hold one's head high,	To turn a deaf ear,
To turn some one's	To have one's ears tingle,
head,	To make the mouth water,
To make the hair rise,	To show one's teeth,
To lead by the nose,	To have on the tip of
To see no further than	one's tongue,
one's nose,	To hold one's sides,
To throw dust in some	To receive with open arms,
one's eyes,	With a high hand,
To be all ears,	Tied hand and foot.

### *Various.*

To make two ends meet,	To lift the mask,
To rob Peter to pay	To pass the time,
' Paul,	To have a good time,
To throw a veil over,	To take one's time,



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To kill time,                      Castles in Spain,  
• To walk on stilts,              In the last resort.

When we find the same idioms both in French and English, it is not of course absolutely certain that the English are translated from the French—some of the more obvious of them at least may have sprung up independently in each language. That the French, who until comparatively recent years have not borrowed much from English, should have taken over many English idioms is not likely ; but the German language has been more subject to the influence of English literature, and some at least of the following phrases, which are current in both languages, may be borrowings from English :

Not to be able to see the wood for the trees, <sup>1</sup>	To get wind of, To have a screw loose,
To let the cat out of the bag,	To pay some one back in his own coin,
To go to the dogs,	Not to ruffle a hair,
To singe one's wings,	To get up with one's wrong foot foremost,
To draw in one's horns,	
To have a crow to pick,	Through thick and thin.

Other French phrases have been adopted into English by changing or modifying the figure :

*Rire sous cape* : •To laugh in one's sleeve.

*Mettre la charrue devant les bœufs* : •To put the  
cart before the horse.

*Faire fausse route* : To take the wrong turning.

*Acheter chat en poche* : To buy a pig in a poke.

*Réveiller le chat qui dort* : •To wake the sleeping dogs.

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is said to have been translated into German by Wieland. Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte*.

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*Faire venir l'eau à son moulin* : to bring grist to one's mill.

*Payer rubis sur l'ongle* : To pay on the nail.

*Avoir le drap et l'argent* : To have one's cake and eat it.

*Jouer sur le velours* : To be on velvet.

*Faire d'une pierre deux coups* : To kill two birds with one stone.

*Grossir un néant en montagne* : To make a mountain out of a mole-hill.

*Mordre à l'hameçon* : To jump at the bait.

*Porter aux nues* : To praise to the skies.

*Mettre en quarantaine* : To send to Coventry.<sup>1</sup>

*Bec et ongles* : Tooth and nail.

*Un chien regard bien un évêque* : A cat may look at a King.

*Le chien du jardinier* : The dog in the manger.

It will be noticed that these images are sometimes more striking and vivid in the English version ; that the unknown benefactors of our language, who have enriched our speech with these foreign coins, have, in the process of re-minting them in English, stamped them with a brighter sheen : our "goose that laid the golden eggs" is a gayer bird, with its alliterative feathers, than the French *poule aux œufs d'or*, and "to kill two birds with one stone" gives a more vivid picture than *faire d'une pierre deux coups*. In other cases the change is due to the need for that assonance, alliteration, and happy rhythm and run of words which phrases of this kind must be given to make them current coin.

<sup>1</sup> The origin of the phrase, "to send to Coventry," has never been satisfactorily explained. May not *Coventry* be a popular corruption of *quarantaine* ?

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Human speech is never adequate to express the richness of human experience ; to give a name to any fragment of it is a triumph for the mind, but it is an even greater triumph when we can embody that fragment in an idiom charged with eager life, which will make it more actual to ourselves, and more vivid to those to whom we wish to describe it. Even to adopt and new-mint a foreign phrase for which we have no equivalent, as when Sterne translated the French saying, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," or Dr. Johnson gave an English shape to the Spanish proverb, "Hell is paved with good intentions," is to perform a service to the language of no small value ; and although our speech has been more enriched than most of us imagine by captures from these foreign reservoirs, I should like to suggest that there are still "as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it"—plenty of lively and glittering figures which we might borrow and add to the resources of our own language with considerable advantage. Even when we have an idiom of our own to express a certain meaning, we shall often find that meaning more vigorously rendered in a foreign figure ; or the foreign idiom may be more poetic, and give to its meaning that enrichment, and gild it with that gleam of beauty, which it is the privilege of words to add to human experience. How much prettier is the German phrase *das Blaue vom Himmel lügen* (to forswear the blue of the sky) than our expression, "to swear that black is white," and compare "to sleep in the open air," with *coucher à la belle étoile*, or the even more beautiful Spanish *dormir en el mesón de la estrella*—"to sleep in the inn of the

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star." But there is much that we can only describe in lifeless words which is much more aptly and energetically rendered in other languages—since each has its store of happy discoveries—by means of images and picturesque locutions. Some of these can be literally translated into English—"to beat down open doors," for instance, "to promise mountains and marvels," which are French idioms, also the Italian phrase "to work under water," or the Spanish, "to limp on the same foot with some one" (to share the same fault or failing), and the German expressions, "to talk to the wind," "to worry over unlaied eggs," "to hurl some one out of his heaven," and the description of something that has been forgotten, "over that the grass grew long ago."

With the greater number of foreign idioms, however, a literal translation will not suffice; they must be re-embodied in the run and rhythm of our speech, given a metallic ring to make them current, and stamped perhaps for this purpose with another image. How can we describe in English *un coup de balai*, *un rire jaune*, *un mauvais plaisant*, or translate the useful phrases, *au pied de la lettre*, *ça coule de source*, *dans les petites boîtes*, *les bons onguents*? Equally difficult to render in English are the following familiar locutions: *Être dans son assiette*, *filer doux*, *chercher midi à quatorze heures*, *reculer pour mieux sauter*, *avoir le diable au corps*, and *manger de la vache enragée*.

The French language, as we might expect in the speech of so social and civilised a people, is especially rich in phrases descriptive of nuances of social intercourse for which we have no equivalents; *payer*

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*de belles paroles*, for instance, *tenir le crachoir*, for absorbing the conversation, and *rompre les chiens*, for abruptly changing the subject. These phrases are probably familiar to us all, but equally happy inventions can be found in Italian and Spanish and German. Although I do not possess much colloquial knowledge of those languages, I have been reading through some of the current handbooks of their idioms, and will give a few of these locutions, adding in brackets their literal translations and their idiomatic meanings. Perhaps some of my readers with a gift for happy phrasing may be able to embody these meanings, as well as the meanings of the French idioms I have already mentioned, in felicitous chimes of words, and perhaps in different figures, which will give them the English stamp they need to become current among us.

We find in Italian many picturesque and lively phrases in which animals and birds figure—here are a few of them, with several other vivid Italian idioms :

*Disputar dell' ombra dell' asino* : To argue about the donkey's shadow ; to dispute about trifles.

*Aspettare il porco alla quercia* : To wait for the pig at the oak-tree ; to watch for the favourable opportunity.

*Invitare l'orso alle pere* : To invite the bear to the pears ; to urge some one to gratify his inclinations.

*Guastar la coda al fagiano* : To spoil the pheasant's tail ; to spoil a story by omitting its point.

*E sparito il merlo* : The blackbird is flown ; the chance is gone.

*Calarsi a un lombrico* : To stoop to a worm ; to take advantage of the smallest gain.

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*Sapere dove il diavolo tiene la coda* : To know where the devil keeps his tail ; to be extremely cunning.

*Toccare il cielo col dito* : To touch the sky with one's finger ; to attain one's utmost wish.

*Cercar miglior pan che di grano* : To hunt for better bread than is made of corn ; to be difficult to please.

*Battere il nocce* : To pound the nut ; to weary oneself trying to convince another person.

*Gonfiar gli orecchi* : To make the ears swell ; to flatter some one.

The Spanish language, which has been described as the only language to make love in, possesses some pretty lovers' idioms, "to drink the air" for some one (*beber los aires*), for instance ; and what could be prettier for a proposal of marriage than *decir su dolor*—"to tell one's woe?" Spanish is rich, too, in idioms and images derived from Catholicism and its rites and symbols. "I am not very Catholic to-day," is the Spanish equivalent for being "under the weather" ; and there is much truth in the Spanish phrases "behind the cross the Devil lurks," and "you cannot both ring the bell and walk in the procession." Other vivid phrases are :

*Buscar tres piés al gato* : To seek three feet to the cat ; to look for a difficulty where there is none ; also to seek a quarrel.

*Echar chispas* : To throw off sparks ; to be in a rage.

*Meterse en camisa de once varas* : To get into a shirt eleven yards long ; to attempt more than one can cope with.

*Tomar por donde quema* : To catch hold of the burning end ; to take in a wrong sense.

*Quemar las cejas* : "To burn one's eye-brows ; to study intensely.

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*Vivir á pierna suelta* : To live with one's leg stretched out ; to live at one's ease.

*Llover sobre mojado* : To rain on a person who is already wet ; to discuss a settled matter.

*A lo hecho, pecho* : - One's breast to the accomplished fact ; we must make the best of what is done.

Of all the languages of Europe, the German language seems to be the richest in poetic and imaginative phrases of popular origin. *Durch die Blumen sprechen* (to speak through the flowers) is a pretty description of speaking in hints ; and " to make a blue mist before some one " (*einen blauen Dunst vormachen*) give a more poetic image than " throwing dust in some one's eyes." *Sein blaues Wunder erleben* (" to live through one's blue wonder ") is an imaginative phrase for being struck with astonishment ; and the expression *der Himmel hängt bei ihm voller Geigen* (" a heaven full of harps hangs round him," as we may freely translate it) is a picturesque description of some one in a fool's paradise which cannot be equalled in any other language. I give a few other German phrases :

*Über alle Berge sein* : To be over all the mountains ; to have utterly disappeared.

*Die Faust in der Tasche ballen* : To clench one's fist in one's pocket ; to control one's rage.

*Einen Stein auf dem Herzen haben* : To have a stone on one's heart ; to be heavy at heart.

*Der Teufel hat sein Spiel dabei* : The Devil has his game in it ; there is danger lurking in it.

*Das ist sein drittes Wort* : That is his third word—the phrase he is always repeating.

All these foreign idioms describe in figures more vivid than any we possess facts and experiences familiar

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to us all, and would be useful additions to our speech could we translate or paraphrase them in chimes of English words. But in the storehouse of foreign locutions there are other idioms of even greater value, phrases which we may call discoveries, since they describe and place before our eyes something unnamed and latent, some nuance of thought or feeling which has hitherto escaped our observation, or of which, at the most, we have been only dimly conscious. The French phrases *l'esprit d'escalier* ("staircase wit"), *plaider le faux pour savoir le vrai* ("to tell lies in order to get at the truth"), *battre le chien devant le lion* ("to be afraid of the lion and beat the dog"—"to pound the sack and mean the ass," as they say in German), the Italian *poco popolo, poca predica* ("scanty people, scanty preaching"), and the German *mit der Thür ins Haus fallen* ("to fall into the house with the front-door"), are little discoveries of this kind which have elucidated, for those who made them, their own experience, and added subtle meanings to their speech.

### XIII

I have shown on a former page how many idioms we have borrowed from French ; it may be of interest to add a list of some at least of those which we have derived from other sources. "To put a spoke in some one's wheel" is a European idiom, which, although found in French, seems to have come to us from Dutch—the contemporary language from which, after French, we have borrowed most—for the word *spoke*, which, if we thought of it (only we seldom think of



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such things), we should see was curiously inappropriate, is probably a mistranslation of the Dutch *spaak*, which has the appropriate meaning of a "bar" or "stave." "To tilt at windmills" is, of course, from Don Quixote. "To make a halt" is, like the word "halt" itself, from the German *Halt machen*; "under the rose" (*sub rosa* in modern Latin) seems also to be of German origin. "An ugly duckling" is from Andersen's *Tales*; "open sesame" and "a Barmecide feast" are from the *Arabian Nights*. The phrase, "of the first water" is of Arabic origin. The slang phrases "first chop," "second chop," and "not the cheese" come from India; "to run amuck" is Malayan, "white elephant" is from Burma, whose kings were supposed to have been in the habit of punishing their courtiers by burdening them with one of these sacred and expensive animals. "To save one's face" is a phrase used by English residents in China; <sup>1</sup> "to bury the hatchet," "to smoke the pipe of peace," "to put on the war-paint," "to go on the war path," are derived, probably for the most part through Cooper's novels, from the aborigines of America.

Many of our more recent idioms have come to us from the United States, but these can hardly be classed as foreign idioms. Linguistically considered, England, the Dominions, and the United States may almost be regarded as one speech-group, the interchange of phrase and vocabulary, the traffic of words across the oceans being so frequent and so free. In some cases, as "log-

<sup>1</sup> It is not, however, the translation of a Chinese idiom; the Chinese expressions are "to lose face," "for the sake of his face." (O.E.D.)

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rolling," "striking oil," "on the fence," the American origin is obvious,<sup>1</sup> but most of us are probably unaware that many of our common expressions like "to make over," "to do one's level best," "to face the music," are of transatlantic origin. "Near by," and the phrase "to have a good time," were once English idioms, which, becoming obsolete in England, survived in America, and then returned to England from that country.

But the principal source of our foreign idioms is, as we have seen, the French language. So great indeed is our debt to French that we have borrowed from it, not only a large number of figurative phrases and European proverbs, but—what is much rarer for one language to borrow from another—grammatical idioms as well. "It goes without saying," "it gives to think," a house "gives" upon the street, "one knows very well," are obvious "Gallicisms," as they are called. "An accomplished fact" is from *un fait accompli*, and our word "apart" is a borrowing of the French idiom *à part*.

The following are also probably translations from French :

To make believe (*faire croire*),  
To make a figure (*faire figure*),  
Not at all (*pas du tout*),  
Nothing less than (*rien moins que*).

<sup>1</sup> As also, for instance, "right away" for "immediately." This is now understood by Englishmen, but puzzled Dickens, who, when he arrived at an American hotel and was asked whether he would have his dinner "right away," replied, after some thought, that he would prefer to have it where he was.

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English has not borrowed many other grammatical idioms from other languages. Jespersen says that the absolute construction, as in "everything considered," or "this being the case," was introduced at a very early period in imitation of the Latin construction;<sup>1</sup> and our learned writers have sometimes made use of Greek and Latin idioms in their writings. Milton, as Addison pointed out, "raised his language," and added to the richness of its texture, by a daring use of Hebrew and Greek and Latin constructions,<sup>2</sup> but none of these have been woven into the texture of the

<sup>1</sup> *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (1912), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Instances are the Virgilian *Musam meditari*,

"And strictly meditate the thankless Muse" (*Lycidas*).

*Post ubem conditum* :

"Bacchus . . .

After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,  
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore" (*Comus*).

"For never, since created Man,  
Metsuch embodied force" (*P. L.*, i. 572).

"Nor delayed the winged saint  
After his charge received" (*Ibid.* v. 248).

"He, after Eve seduced, unminded slunk  
Into the wood fast by" (*Ibid.* x. 332).

*Ille*.

"Which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world" (*Ibid.* iv. 271).

*Me miserum!*

"Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?" (*Ibid.* iv. 73).

*Cursum est*.

"Forthwith on all sides to his aid was run  
By Angels many and strong" (*Ibid.* vi. 335).

The lines in *Paradise Lost* (iv. 323-4),

"Adam, the goodliest man of men since born  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve,"

are, as Mr. Verity points out, "a famous example of an idiom often used by Elizabethan, as it had been by Greek, writers.

Its independent existence in Greek and English proves

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language—they are literary curiosities, pedantic felicities, rather than enrichments of our idiomatic speech.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the idioms which have been translated into English, there are a large number of Latin, French, and even Italian idioms which we have borrowed without assimilating them in any way. Phrases like *ad interim*, *in medias res*, *vice versa*, *mutatis mutandis*, *au fait*, *au contraire*, *tête-à-tête*, *pied-à-terre*, *coup d'état*, *dolce far niente*, are familiar to us all, and there are hundreds of others. How greatly we need idioms for the purposes of expression is shown by the way we put up with these awkward and unassimilated phrases; and by translating one of them into English, and noting how much meaning evaporates in the process, we realize the nature of idioms of this kind, the meanings they derive from their usage, and not from the logical signification of the words which compose them. A *pied-à-terre* is not the same thing as a "foot on the ground"; "black beast" or "white card" are by no means adequate translations of *bête noire* or *carte blanche*.

The greater number, however, of our borrowed idioms have been assimilated; for they are drawn, for

that the idiom, though illogical, is natural—due perhaps to over-emphasis. It is just the sort of combined construction into which people slip in conversation." (*Milton, Paradise Lost*, edited by A. W. Verity, M.A., 1910, p. 462.) Mr. Verity gives in his notes many other instances of Milton's use of foreign idioms.

<sup>1</sup> One exception should, perhaps, be made. Our phrase, "to save appearances," is a translation of the Greek astronomical phrase, *εἰς τὸ σῶμα τὰ φαινόμενα*, which was said of a hypothesis which satisfactorily explained the facts. In the form, "to save the phenomena," the phrase was used by

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the most part, from the popular speech of Europe, and are therefore easy to translate, being composed of homely images, derived from objects and occupations familiar to all the inhabitants of European countries. Whether of foreign or native origin, these figures of popular speech render the thoughts they express in terms of common life, in vivid, concrete phrases which every one can understand.

### XIV

But besides the metaphors from various familiar occupations and objects, there are two sources of idiomatic speech which are both closer to the texture of life, and also much richer in figures and phrases than any which have been previously mentioned. Hitherto, indeed, I have but skirted the fringe of my subject; the real heart of idiom is to be found in two special classes of idiomatic phrases, which are closely connected with each other. The first of these great sources of idiom is nothing less than the human body itself. About almost every external, and many of the internal parts of the human body, are clustered whole constellations of phrases and figures of speech of extraordinary vividness and variety. Idioms of this

Bacon; the current form, "to save appearances," is first found in *Paradise Lost*.

"He His fabric of the heavens  
Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move  
His laughter at their quaint opinions wide  
Hereafter, when they come to model heaven,  
And calculate the stars; how they will wield  
The mighty frame; how build, unbuild, contrive,  
To save appearances" (viii. 77-82).

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kind, "to set one's face against," "to turn a deaf ear," "to put down one's foot," etc., I may perhaps call "somatic" idioms; their number is enormous, and I have collected in an appendix to this chapter many hundreds of them, in which about fifty parts of the human body, the head and its features, the arms and hands and fingers, the legs and feet and toes, the heart, the bones, the blood and breath within the body, are all put to vivid expressive uses. We find the same linguistic phenomenon in other languages; a number of the somatic idioms in English are translations from the Hebrew or the Greek of the Bible, others have apparently been borrowed from French, which also contains many phrases of this kind.<sup>1</sup> In this effort, however, to render human thought in phrases descriptive of the acts and attitudes of the body, English possesses one great advantage over the Romanic languages in what I have called its "phrasal verbs"—verbs whose full meaning is conveyed by the adverb or preposition which follows it, and which is often placed at some distance from it. For when we examine these phrasal verbs, we find that by far the greater number of them also render their meanings into terms of bodily sensation. They are formed from simple verbs which express the acts, motions, and attitudes of the body and its members;

<sup>1</sup> In most French dictionaries, and in any book of French phrases, will be found many idiomatic expressions under the headings of *bouche*, *bras*, *cœur*, *coude*, *doigt*, *dent*, *dos*, *face*, *jambe*, *main*, *nez*, etc. In German and Italian and Spanish also are found many idioms connected with the same parts of the human body. The hand plays perhaps the largest part in the idioms of all languages. Ramon Cabellero, in his *Diccionario de Modismos* (p. 1187), has collected nearly three hundred Spanish phrases in which it figures.

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and these, combining with prepositions like "up," "down," "over," "off," etc. (which also express ideas of motion), have acquired, in addition to their literal meanings, an enormous number of idiomatic significations, by means of which the relations of things to each other, and a great variety of the actions, feelings, and thoughts involved in human intercourse, are translated, not into visual images, but into what psychologists call "kinaesthetic" images, that is to say, sensations of the muscular efforts which accompany the attitudes and motions of the body.<sup>1</sup> Idioms like "on the rocks" or "under a cloud" are visual images; phrasal verbs like "to pull through," "to keep up," are kinaesthetic metaphors, arousing imagined sensations of muscular effort. These verbs of motion and effort possess so protean and self-multiplying a power of entering into combinations, and throw off idioms in so kaleidoscopic a variety, that, compared with the other inert elements of our vocabulary, they seem to possess, like radium, an inexhaustible store of life and energy.

The richest in idiom of these verbs are the following: "Go," "come," "run," "fall," "turn," "stand," "get," "take," "look," "put," "set," "lay." All of these are what I may perhaps call "dynamic" verbs, which express movement or attitudes of the body; for "stand," which might seem, like "lie," a static verb, keeps, in its idiomatic uses, its original sense of maintaining an erect attitude, and is

<sup>1</sup> Some of these verbs, like "keep" and "hold," suggest only muscular effort, but not movement; in others, like "take," "get," "pull," "put," suggestions of movement and effort are present, while a verb like "fall" implies only passive movement without effort.

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therefore full of muscular suggestion. "To lie," on the other hand, remains for the most part a static verb, and, save in its dynamic use, "lie down," enters into few idiomatic combinations. The transitive verb, however, "to lay" is strongly dynamic, and enters into more than a hundred idioms. The same contrast is to be found between the mainly static verb "to see," with the poverty of idiom, and the idiomatic richness of the vividly dynamic verb "to look." Other verbs of mere thought and perception, like "know," "think," "feel," arouse no muscular sensations, and enter into few or no idiomatic phrases.

It will be seen that the verbs mentioned above are all, except "run," extremely generalized in meaning; and even "run," from the sense of swift motion on the feet, has come to express a generalized idea of abstract motion. Verbs expressing more definite bodily acts, "to hit," "to strike," "to knock," "to kick," "to shake," "to throw," also enter into idioms, but not with the same freedom as the more abstract verbs of action. It seems in fact to be a law of idiom that the more generalized a word of motor signification becomes, the more it is freed from visual images, and divested of all sensations save these of a purely kinaesthetic nature, the readier it is to enter into idiomatic combinations of great richness and variety.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The languages derived from Latin, owing probably to their longer history as instruments of thought, and the more subtle analysis to which their vocabularies have been subjected, possess a number of words whose purely kinaesthetic meanings cannot be accurately translated into English. Thus for instance, while we can render the French verbs *venir*, *tenir*, *persuader*, *faire*, by their equally abstract English equivalents, "come," "hold," "take," "make," we have no one word



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"Take" is a typical instance of a dynamic verb which has been subjected to this process. From its primary sense of touching with the hand, it came to mean "to lay hands on," "to seize," and was then generalized into an elementary notion of a motor kind which seems to be incapable of further analysis. As the *Oxford Dictionary* points out, it can mean to "give," and also to "go" ("he took across the field"), and it can also mean to "make" ("he 'took' a leap, he 'took' a journey").

"Keep," which seems to have had originally much the same meaning as "take"—"to lay hold of with the hands"—has also become very generalized in its meaning, retaining indeed little more than a suggestion of will and muscular effort. "Go" and "come" are abstract verbs of motion, so generalized that they are almost interchangeable in some of their idiomatic uses. A ship *goes*, a box *comes* to pieces; the sun *goes* behind a cloud, *comes* out from behind it. An unfortunate

to express the French word *battre* in all its applications, but must translate it by means of more concrete words like "beat," "strike," "thrash," etc. In some of its idiomatic uses, such as *battre le pavé*, *battre la campagne*, *battre froid à*, we can hardly translate it at all. So the French word *coup*, which designates the result of *battre*, is much more generalized in meaning than the English "blow," and enters into a number of useful idioms such as *coup d'œil*, *coup de théâtre*, *coup d'état*, *coup d'essai*, which we have had to borrow in their French forms, for want of an exact equivalent of *coup*. Other French words which, for the same reason, are difficult to translate in their idiomatic uses, are the verbs *toucher*, *tirer*, *filer*, *piquer*, *jouer*, and the nouns *prise* and *mise* and *trait*. The Spanish verbs *dejar*, "to leave," *llevar*, "to carry," *sacar*, "to extract," and above all *echar*, "to throw," are much more generalized and purely kinaesthetic in their meanings than their English equivalents, and enter into many more idiomatic combinations.

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person may *come* to grief, or *go* to the dogs, with equal facility in either direction.

And yet it is exactly from these abstract verbs, in combination with adverbs and prepositions of abstract direction, that we derive thousands of the vivid colloquialisms and idiomatic phrases by means of which we describe the greatest variety of human actions and relations. We can take *to* people, take them *up*, take them *down*, take them *off*, or take them *in*; <sup>1</sup> keep *in* with them, keep them *down* or *off* or *on* or *under*; get *at* them, or *round* them, or get *on* with them; do *for* them, do *with* them or *without* them, and do them *in*; make *up* to them, make *up* with them, make *off* with them; set them *up* or *down*, or hit them *off*—indeed, there is hardly any action or attitude of one human being to another which cannot be expressed by means of these phrasal verbs.

So readily do our bodily and muscular sensations lend themselves to the expression of meaning, that often we find one of these combinations will possess, according to the context, a great number of different significations. Thus to “go on” can mean to “proceed,” to “continue,” to “behave reprehensively” (in fact to “carry on”), and it has recently come to mean “to talk volubly”—(“how he did go on!”) To “get on” is to mount, to hurry, to prosper, to grow old,

<sup>1</sup> The difference between the literal and the idiomatic meanings of what Dr. Johnson called “the low, vulgar phrase” “to take in” is amusingly illustrated by a bit of dialogue in *Dr. Syntax's Town*, when the hostess presents the Doctor with an overcharged bill:

Hostess: “I took you in, last night, I say.”  
Syntax: “’Tis true—and if this bill I pay,  
You’ll take me in again to-day.”

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or to be on good terms with some one. The *Oxford Dictionary* cites fifty-two meanings of "take up," and sixty-seven of "set up"; and indeed "up" being of all our prepositions the most charged with motor suggestion, enters most freely into combinations with verbs of movement, and forms with them the greatest variety of kinaesthetic idioms.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we often add "up" to verbs, in cases where, for the logical meaning, the preposition is not needed, as "wake up," "hurry up," "cheer up," "fill up," "clean up,"<sup>2</sup> etc. It would almost seem as if these particles and verbs of action took the place in our northern speech of the gestures in which our intercourse is lacking, but which are so vivid an accompaniment to the speech of the Latin peoples, whose languages are poor in the emphatic use of particles.

If, as I have been suggesting, we use these verbs to translate our thoughts into terms of bodily sensation, or, adapting Donne's phrase, to make "the body think," this would perhaps explain one curious characteristic of modern speech, our colloquial use of the phrase "have got" for the simple verb "have." If any of us will take note—by no means an easy thing

<sup>1</sup> "Up," and other prepositions, sometimes combine with other particles to form, without a verb, an idiomatic phrase, as "up to," "up against," "in for," "out for," "down on," "down and out," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson in his *Dictionary* notes more than once this apparently pleonastic use of particles. "Down," he says, "is sometimes added to 'fall,' and 'up' is often used with 'fill,' without much addition to the force of the verbs." In his note, however, on "beating up" for soldiers, he seems to have hit, without knowing it, on the real meaning of this use, remarking that though the word "up" seems redundant, yet it "enforces the sense." The dynamic use of particles could not be more admirably expressed.

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to do—of his own talk, or that of his friends, he will, I think, find that “I’ve got,” or “he’s got” always, or almost always, replaces “I have,” or “he has.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson noted in his Dictionary this use of “got” as implying mere possession :

“He has got a *good estate*, does not always mean that he has acquired, but barely that he possesses it. So we say,” Dr. Johnson adds, “*the lady* has got *black eyes*, merely meaning that she has them.”

If my theory be right, the explanation of this curious, apparently superfluous, and not very beautiful idiom is simply that the verb “have,” being used as an auxiliary, has lost whatever kinaesthetic associations it originally possessed ; and since it now describes a static, or merely grammatical relation, “got,” from the dynamic verb “get,” has been added to it,<sup>2</sup> to give it the vividness which comes from the idea of action, in however vague a form.<sup>3</sup> Thus, too, we might account for the idiom “to make bold,” which Dr. Johnson con-

<sup>1</sup> The *Oxford Dictionary* suggests, as an analogy of this use of “got,” the Greek *κεκῆσθαι*, meaning “to possess,” literally “to have acquired,” from *κτάσμαι*, “to procure for oneself,” “to get,” “to gain,” “to acquire.”

<sup>2</sup> This would also explain the modern colloquialism “I have got to,” for “I have to,” meaning “I am obliged” to do something.

<sup>3</sup> Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* quotes an amusing passage, in which many of the uses of this ubiquitous verb are parodied :

“I got on horse back within ten minutes after I got your letter. When I got to Canterbury I got a chaise for town ; but I got wet through, and have got such a cold that I shall not get rid of in a hurry. I got to the Treasury about noon, but first of all got shaved and dressed. I soon got into the secret of getting a memorial before the Board, but I could not get an answer then ; however, I got intelligence from a messenger that I should get one next morning. As soon as

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sidered "ungrammatical," suggesting that "to be bold," would be better and more correct. This note in Johnson's Dictionary brings into clear relief the difference between logic and idiom; to "be bold" is certainly a more logical expression, and was therefore approved of by the linguistic taste of the eighteenth century, while modern taste would prefer the more idiomatic and vivid expression which Dr. Johnson condemned.

As we see in the above instance, it is not only in combination with adverbs and prepositions that these verbs of energy and motion give rise to idioms. They combine (as in "make bold") with adjectives and adverbs—"make good," "make sure," "hold true," "run low," "run short," etc. They can combine also with other verbs ("make believe," "come to pass," etc.), or with nouns, "make peace," "make love," "make friends," "make money,"<sup>1</sup> "go bail," "keep time," "lay claim," "run risks," etc. A reference to the Dictionary will show, moreover, that these verbs combine in great profusion with the names of the parts of the human body to form idiomatic phrases which seem especially charged with vivid meaning. To "hold one's tongue," to "make eyes at," to "put one's foot down," to "set one's face against," to "get one's back up," to "turn up one's nose," to "take to one's heels,"

I got back to my inn, I got my supper, and then got to bed. When I got up next morning, I got my breakfast, and, having got dressed, I got out in time to get an answer to my memorial. As soon as I got it, I got into a chaise, and got back to Canterbury by three, and got home for tea. I have got nothing for you, and so adieu."

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson also condemned the phrase to "make money." "Don't you see," he said to Boswell, "the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to coin it." (*Boswell*, 1777.)

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are instances of these animated phrases, and there are many others.<sup>1</sup>

### XV

Having now examined the forms and sources of our figurative idioms, it may be interesting to glance at the uses they are put to, to examine what, in the main, is their subject-matter, and what are the aspects of life and experience to which they give expression. Since our idioms, whether of English or foreign growth, are, as we have seen, so largely of popular origin, we should hardly expect to find abstract thought embodied in them, or scientific observation, or aesthetic appreciation, or psychological analysis of any subtle kind ;—and these indeed are almost completely lacking. The subject-matter of idiom is human life in its simpler aspects ; prudent and foolish conduct, success and failure, and above all human relations—the vivid attitudes and feelings of people intensely interested in each other and their mutual dealings—approval, but far more largely disapproval, friendly, but more often hostile feelings, fallings out and makings up, rivalries and over-reachings, reprobation, chastisement, and abuse.

There is much humour in our English idiom,<sup>2</sup> but there is little that is romantic, or makes a direct appeal to the sense of beauty ; expressions like the French

<sup>1</sup> Prepositions and adverbs of direction also form, without verbs, idioms of this kind, as we see in the phrases "down in the mouth," "off one's head," "up to the eyes," "out at elbows," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Humorous understatement, "not half," "I don't think," etc. is one characteristic element in English idiom.

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*dormir à la belle étoile* would sound strangely in our popular speech, and poetical phrases like "no rose without a thorn," "one swallow does not make a summer," still carry with them the stamp of their foreign origin.<sup>1</sup> Nor does our idiom waste breath on refined ethical considerations. The ideals of Christianity find no reflection in its phrases; its values are the values of this world, and its atmosphere one of shrewd, hard, unromantic common sense. Success and money are highly prized, and there are many metaphorical phrases to express satisfaction in them. To be "first fiddle," for instance, or "cock of the walk," to have the "ball at one's feet," the "game in one's hands," to "feather one's nest," "to be in clover," "to live like a fighting cock," "to have one's bread buttered on both sides," etc.

Perhaps the most moral, as well as the most vivid and numerous of English idioms are those which express what the admirers of the English race regard as one of its most admirable characteristics—determination, unwillingness to give up and to admit defeat. "To set one's teeth," "to put one's shoulder to the wheel" and "one's back to the wall," to "go through fire and water," to "stick to one's guns," to "die hard," "to nail one's colours to the mast," are a few among

<sup>1</sup> A few poetic phrases, however, can be found in the dictionaries of the various dialects. "To be over the moon with oneself," for instance, "to wait till the moon come never," and the phrase, "as deep as the North Star," for a solemn child. Edward FitzGerald, in his *Sea Phrases*, collected from the talk of the sailors and fishermen with whom he consorted, the description of hurrying clouds "running to a fair," of the sea "beginning to show his ivory," and of a conger eel stranded in winter "through blinding himself by striking at the stars."

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the many metaphorical expressions of this "dogged" characteristic. It finds expression, too, in phrasal verbs like "hold out," "keep on," "pull through," to "go through with," and many others. To "muddle through" is a phrase which has almost been adopted as a national motto; and the phrasal verb "to carry on" which had already so many uses, acquired still another meaning in the European War.

But the main subject-matter of idiom is, as I have said, what is after all the subject of greatest interest to human beings, their relations to each other. There are many idiomatic synonyms to express meetings and visitings, "to fall in with," "to run across," "to knock up against," "to call on," "to look in," "to turn up," to "run" or "drop" or "happen in." There are a certain number of idiomatic phrases which describe terms of disinterested friendship—"to take to," "to cotton to," "to make friends with," "to hit it off," "to get on like a house on fire"; but the better feelings of human nature are not the ones which create the most vivid phrases, and our vocabulary of dislike, of rivalry, hostility, disapprobation, is much more copious and expressive.

There are many phrases to describe various ways of getting the better of others, and unfriendly triumph over them. "To catch tripping," "to take in," "to get round," "to do out of," "to steal a march on," "to leave in the lurch," "to twist round one's finger," "to have the upper hand," "to crow over," "to owe a grudge," "to hold at bay," "to keep at arm's length," "to give the cold shoulder," "to be at daggers drawn," "to have a bone to pick with," are a few among a



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great many idioms which express dislike and hostile relations. Idioms which describe friendly conversation are not numerous, while the vocabulary of reproof and vituperation is extremely rich and expressive. "To jump on," "to pitch into," "to go for," "to go on at," "to come down upon," "to catch it," "to get it hot," are a few of these vivid expressions. There are two human characteristics which are more frequently picked out for reprobation than any others. Listlessness, ineffectiveness, is the first of these; to be "good for nothing," "rotten to the core," a "bad egg," "not worth one's salt," "neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring." The second is pretentiousness, boastfulness, "giving oneself airs," "putting on side," "talking big," "showing off," "putting it on," etc.

Of human feelings beside those of friendliness or hostility, the one which figures most in idiom is exasperation—to be "put out," "rubbed the wrong way," "touched on the raw," to have one's "blood boil," or one's "teeth set on edge." Next to this is surprise and amazement, to be "taken aback," "struck all of a heap," to have one's "breath taken away," or one's "heart in one's mouth." Phrases descriptive of low spirits, or of fear, are not numerous; there are a number of phrases, however, like "at a loss," "at sea," etc., to describe mental bewilderment.

I have already mentioned the sententiousness of the kitchen; many similar phrases, homely, and as "full as eggs" of observation and shrewd wisdom, come to us from the farm-yard, the kennels, and the stables. These sometimes take the form of absurd images, like "a mare's nest," "a bull in a china shop," "putting

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the cart before the horse," or "teaching one's grandmother to suck eggs" ; sometimes they are embodied in set proverbs, like "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," "every dog has its day," "you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," etc. But these have been already quoted under the headings of their various sources.

In spite of its element of humour and gnomic wisdom, the great body of our English idioms can perhaps be described as expressions of determination, of exasperation, and vituperation. To take these, however, as fairly expressing the national character, to find in the exasperation and acrimony of English idiom a true representation of the spirit of a morose and contentious race, would be to misunderstand the part that idiom plays in language, and the occasions and circumstances in which, for the most part, it is used. According to one linguistic theory, language is the child of will, not of sensation, and had its origin, not in perception, not in the communication of intellectual concepts, but in action, in the utterances which accompany human action, and which are above all intended to stimulate social activity in human beings engaged together in a common task. Whether this be true or not of the origin of speech, it is certainly true of much idiom—and idiom has many of the characteristics of primitive speech. Its main object is not self-expression, but exhortation or reproof ; the person or persons spoken to are more important than the speaker ; what they are to do, or to cease doing, how they are to act, for what kinds of behaviour they are to be reprovèd, are the main subjects which con-

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cern it ; and its phrases, struck out in the practical emergencies of some special pursuit, when success or failure were hanging perhaps in the balance, are vivid with the communicable emotions of incitement and reprobation and abuse. There are good reasons why idiom is especially fitted for this kind of excited intercourse ; its images are forcible and vivid, and above all its metaphors from the body, and its phrasal verbs, are charged with energy and muscular associations, and it is thus enabled to convey its importunate meanings, not to the intellect alone, but, by a short circuit, as it were, directly to those centres of the nervous system whence muscular action proceeds. We may for instance persuade a companion to persevere in a task we have undertaken together by producing in his mind a logical conviction, by means of logical speech, that such conduct is his duty, or is advantageous to him, and that conviction may then filter down to the centres which control his actions ; or we may convey the emotional suggestion directly to these nerve-centres by means of vivid idioms, urging him to "keep on," to "bear up," to "hold out," to "set his teeth," and "stand firm," to "fight tooth and nail," to "keep his head up," and "hang on by the eyelids," and by emphatically impressing on him the ignominy of "hanging back" or "giving up," of "sneaking off," of "going under," "turning tail," or "taking to his heels."

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### XVI

These then are the main uses of idioms in our colloquial speech. Their forms and their principal sources of origin have already been discussed, but there remains still one more point for consideration—the place of idiom in Standard English, and the part it plays in our literary language. The taste of the eighteenth century on the whole condemned it, regarding idiomatic phrases as vulgarisms, and as offences against logic and human reason. Even Addison, while employing idioms in his prose, warned poets against their use,<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Johnson more ambitiously attempted to banish them from our language, often stigmatizing them as “low” and “ungrammatical” in his Dictionary, and declaring that he had laboured “to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations.”<sup>2</sup>

Although this point of view is now an obsolete one, and we should all probably agree with Landor’s saying that “every good writer has much idiom; it is the life and spirit of language,” yet laws when they have been repealed, and bygone proscriptions, even when they have been shown to be devoid of valid ground and reason, still often leave behind a slight stigma of

<sup>1</sup> “Since . . . phrases . . . used in ordinary conversation become too familiar to the ear, and contract a kind of meanness by passing through the mouths of the vulgar, a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking.” (*Spectator*, No. 285.)

<sup>2</sup> *Rambler*, No. 208.

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disapprobation ; and so, I think, we are still a little influenced by the eighteenth-century attitude towards idiom, although we have ceased to believe in the reasons for that attitude. This is certainly true in regard to what are considered grammatical solecisms ; it influences also, as I have said, our feeling in regard to prepositions at the end of clauses, and also, to a slighter extent, it affects us with a prejudice against phrasal verbs, and many of the colloquialisms and homely metaphors in which popular speech is so extremely rich. These are often regarded as vulgar and slangy, and many of them no doubt possess that character ; and others there are which have made good,<sup>1</sup> and there are many which deserve a better use than they are put to, and might be endenized in our standard speech with great advantage. The discrimination between slang and idiom is one of the nicest points in literary usage ; and, like all such discriminations, must be based on sensitiveness and literary tact ; there are no precise rules which are easy to apply to individual cases. It is mostly a matter of usage, and of a delicate sense of what is accepted and what is not. As the writers of *The King's English* put it, "The idiomatic writer differs chiefly from the slangy in using what was slang and is now idiom."<sup>2</sup> But usage, and the tact which is sensitive to it, are not entirely arbitrary matters ; reasons and principles (as we have seen in discussing the taste of the eighteenth century) do

<sup>1</sup> Dean Alford, for instance, writing in 1864, speaks of the idiom "to come to grief" as almost a slang phrase, or one which had but lately ceased to be slangy. (*The Queen's English*, p. 189.)

<sup>2</sup> *The King's English*, p. 53.

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ultimately affect them ; and if, as I think, we are still vaguely and subconsciously a little prejudiced against the use of idiom, I should like to put the case for it as emphatically as I can, even if it be somewhat to the extent of what is called special pleading.

Of the different kinds of idiom, the mere idiosyncrasies, the use of prepositions, etc., are, of course, universally accepted, and nothing need be said in their favour ; no one can write or speak good English without them. This is true also of most of the terse, elliptical adverbial phrases ; although here, I think, usage will be found to vary considerably, our idiomatic writers tending to make a more liberal use of phrases like "not at all," "just now," "the other day," "by and by," "time and again," "all day long," etc., while others, with no feeling for idiom, will tend unconsciously to avoid them.

Next in our classification of idioms, we come to the anomalies, both grammatical and logical. Is there anything to be said for the first of these, for the literary use of these grammatical solecisms which have established themselves in our colloquial talk ? Is it not possible to maintain that these little irregularities which custom has accepted, these authorized departures from the beaten track of speech, have a certain value and vividness of their own which we might compare, perhaps, to those slight irregularities and tiny flaws, which, in the arts and handicrafts, in painting, sculpture, architecture, in work in leather or glass or metal, preserve some sense of the material employed—the stubborn material that, while it yields half-reluctantly to the form imposed upon it, still preserves some element,

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tenacious and untamed, of its original texture, quality, and life? We have imposed our reason so rigorously upon the imagination, and all the unreasonableness of our human nature; the tendency of our language sets so strongly towards conformity of syntax, towards the mechanical, the monotonous, the trite; our speech, and above all our writing, is so apt to run into uniform moulds of logical expression, that now and then a queer spelling, an anomalous plural, a blunder or hesitation, an irresponsible defiance of grammar or logic, awakens our attention—does it not?—and conveys its meaning the more vividly by the very fact of its irregular form and appearance.

Even the French purists of the seventeenth century, strict as they were in many ways, were still able (unlike our purists of a century later) to recognize the charm of grammatical solecisms; the most eminent of them, Claude de Vaugelas, writing for instance, "The beauty of language actually consists in this illogical way of speaking, provided always that it is authorized by custom." "It is noteworthy," he adds, "that all the ways of speaking which custom has established in contravention of the rules of grammar, should, far from being regarded as vicious, and as errors to be avoided, be on the contrary cherished as an adornment of language, which exists in all beautiful languages whether living or dead."<sup>1</sup>

This charm of the exceptional and the irregular in diction accounts for the curious fact that we can enjoy the use of idiom even in a dead language which we do not know very well; and it also explains the subtlety

<sup>1</sup> Bréal, *Semantics* (1900), p. 272.

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of effect which Milton achieved by transfusing Greek or Latin constructions into his English verse. And who has not been aware of the vividness of those Anglo-Irish idioms which we find in modern Irish writers, the charm of whose enchanting speech is largely due to their use of Irish constructions which are unfamiliar in English? These idioms, "I took the hand of her," "is herself at home?" "he interrupted me, and I writing my letters," are, as Mr. Joyce points out, translations into English of idioms which are long-established and correct in the Gaelic language.<sup>1</sup>

The logical anomalies of idiom, the figurative phrases with meanings different from the meanings of the words which compose them, hardly stand in need of any defence. These echoes of war and the chase, of the farm-yard, of kitchen gossip and vituperation, these vigorous expressions which have come to us from popular speech, and which still seem to carry, like overtones, some sense of the acts and occasions which gave them birth; this breath of the sea and the open fields, is a vivid, concrete, racy element in our language which we owe to innumerable, anonymous, and illiterate men and women of wit and linguistic genius, who, inglorious but not mute, have crystallized bits of their experience in shining phrases, enshrined them as it were in the amber of words, and coined them into images and embodied them in locutions which have passed into the mouths of all English-speaking people. Amid all the other learned accumulations of the English language, its echoes from Greek and Latin, from French and Italian sources, and from the writings of our own

<sup>1</sup> P. W. Joyce, *English as We Speak it in Ireland*. (1910.)



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famous phrase-makers and famous poets, this element from the popular speech of England or the Continent forms an element of our language which we could not do without. The images which it weaves into the tapestry of language are homely scenes of life in the open, and the figures of familiar animals and birds. They fly at no high pitch of thought, but they have one advantage over the figures and quotations of nobler source and range. They are made of durable and homespun materials, and they seem never to wear out. Quotations from the poets weary us if too often repeated, flowers from the garden of speech soon wither, learned figures become trite and hackneyed, but the pot and the frying-pan, the wet-blanket and the spilt milk, the cat in the bag, and the pig in the poke, never lose their moral application ; nor can we ever tire of the misadventures of those immortal rustics who count their chickens before they are hatched, harness the cart before the horse, fall between two stools, or most injudiciously keep on throwing stones from the glazed windows of the houses in which they live.

This radio-active quality of popular idiom, this power to give out life and never lose it, is shared by those phrases from the Bible which are woven into our speech, and which are also so largely drawn from the peasant life, the handicrafts, and humble occupations of the East. Still more imperishable and incapable of becoming hackneyed are the somatic idioms which cluster about the features and limbs of the human body ; and that greater number of kinæsthetic idioms created by phrasal verbs—idioms made, not by visual but kinæsthetic images, metaphors and ideated sensations of

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movement and bodily attitude and action. But with regard to these, a critical note may not be out of place. Owing to their close connexion with prepositions at the end of clauses (and these terminal prepositions are generally the detachable parts of phrasal verbs), they have shared in the discredit which this English usage has incurred ; and when Dryden, in revising his prose, moved back his prepositions, he also eliminated a number of phrasal verbs, changing "bound up" to "limited," "brought in" to "introduced," and "looking upon" to "regarding," etc. Dr. Johnson's attitude towards them is easy to understand ; so numerous are these phrasal verbs, and so vast their range of meaning, that they are a burden to the life of the lexicographer ; and wishing, as Dr. Johnson wished, to do away with "grammatical irregularities" he naturally disapproved of these idiomatic combinations,<sup>1</sup> and found "despicable" in their diction the lines in which the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes* commends the paternal kindness of Manoah :

Fathers are wont to *lay up* for their sons,  
Thou for thy son art bent to *lay out* all.<sup>2</sup>

Whether due to the disapproval of old-fashioned grammarians, or to the fact that their use is, for the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Johnson's *Dictionary*, "to come by," meaning to "obtain." This, Johnson says, seems "an irregular and improper use"; but finding it in Hooker, Shakespeare, Bacon, and Dryden, he is forced to admit that it "has very powerful authorities." "To come by" originally, the *Oxford Dictionary* says, implied effort. Since its kinaesthetic association has faded away, the idiom has more or less fallen out of use, and has been replaced by "get."

<sup>2</sup> S. A., 1485. See *Rambler*, No. 140. The italics of disapproval are of course Johnson's.

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most part, more colloquial than literary, there still persists a certain prejudice against phrasal verbs, and many writers half-consciously avoid them. These combinations are, it is true, almost always colloquial, and being popular in their origin, they are often, especially at their first introduction, condemned as slang. But they are genuinely English in their character; they add immensely to the richness of our vocabulary,<sup>1</sup> and they are full of energetic life, and enrich our consciousness with the half-conscious association of many muscular sensations; and it is perhaps in colloquialisms of this kind, where abstract verbs and particles of motion combine into vivid nucleuses of living speech, that we come nearest to the idiomatic heart of the English language.

The development of these phrasal verbs is moreover in the line of that progress of language which has been so brilliantly defined by the Danish linguist, Dr. Jespersen—a progress which, he finds, has been, among European tongues, most successfully achieved by the English language. The principle of this progress is that of analysis—an analysis of meanings, in which each separate element of a complex idea is expressed by a separate term, instead of all the elements being

<sup>1</sup> "In its power of expressing fine distinctions of meaning by this method English vies with Greek and German, and has a great advantage over the Romanic languages, which have hardly any compound verbs at all." Bradley, *The Making of English*, p. 123.

I find the following in a standard book on French composition: "Owing to the facility with which these particles are tacked on to almost any English verb, it will be next to impossible, in the French translation, not to take something away from the precise meaning of the original." (W. Duhamel, *Advanced French Prose Composition* (1904), p. 67.)

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fused together, as in synthetic languages, into one inseparable word. This method of analysis adds, as he points out, suppleness to expression ; for the separate elements can be arranged in varying order, and shades of meaning more clearly rendered by placing them in emphatic or unemphatic positions in the sentence. The sentences quoted on a former page, with prepositions at the ends of clauses, are illustrations of this advantage, and a further justification of the phrasal verb, which is an ancient and long-established idiom of our speech. Many of these verbs are, in fact, of great antiquity ; they abound in the translations of the Bible, and in the Prayer Book ; and the following familiar lines from Shakespeare and Milton will prove (if proof be needed) that our greatest poets have not disdained their use :

“ Oh ! how shall summer’s honey breath *hold out*,”

“ *Keep up* your bright swords, for the dew will rust them,”

“ *Put out* the light, and then *put out* the light,”

“ Sweet the *coming on*  
Of grateful evening mild,”

“ But still I see the tenor of Man’s woe  
*Holds on* the same.”

These quotations suggest a subject which, in itself, might be the subject of a long essay—the use, namely, which various authors in various periods have made, not only of phrasal verbs, but of the other idiomatic elements of our language. But this is a subject which still awaits investigation, though it is plain to all of

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is that our authors vary greatly in this respect. There are some writers, like Gibbon and Dr. Johnson, whose prose is almost devoid of idiom, and whose sentences could almost be translated word for word into another language; while there are others, like Dryden, Addison, Swift, Sterne, and Lamb, who write, not in imitation of Latin prose, but of English speech, and whose pages abound in idioms and colloquial turns. Of these, Sterne and Charles Lamb make the fullest use of idioms, and especially of phrasal verbs—their pages seem to shimmer and sparkle with these little nucleuses of living speech.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Addison's prose is, to a sound taste, the best model of good colloquial, idiomatic English; but it was Dryden, I think, who, in spite of qualms about his prepositions, best caught and reproduced these enchanting qualities, the rhythm, the phrasing, the tamber, and accent of the living voice.

"Dionysius and Nero had the same longings, but with all their power they could never bring their business well about. 'Tis true, they proclaimed themselves poets by sound of trumpet, and poets they were, upon pain of death to any man who durst call them otherwise. The audience had a fine time on't, you may imagine; they sat in a bodily fear, and looked as demurely as they could; for it was a hanging matter to laugh unseasonably; and the tyrants were suspicious,

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt describes Sterne's style as the pure essence of English conversational style—"The most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic of any that is to be found" (*Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, vi.). A famous passage in *Tristram Shandy* will illustrate Hazlitt's meaning: "The Accusing Spirit, which flew up to Heaven's chimney with the oath, blushed as he gave it in—and the Recording Angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever." (vi. 322.)

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as they had reason, that their subjects had 'em in the wind ; so, every man, in his own defence, set as good a face upon the business as he could. 'Twas known beforehand that the monarchs were to be crowned laureates ; but when the show was over, and an honest man was suffered to depart quietly, he took out his laughter which he had stifled, with a firm resolution never more to see an Emperor's play, though he had been ten years a-making it,"<sup>1</sup>

"*Neque haec in fœdera veni* is the very excuse which Aeneas makes, when he leaves his lady : ' I made no such bargain with you at our marriage, to live always drudging on at Carthage : my business was Italy ; and I never made a secret of it. If I took my pleasure, had not you your share of it ? I leave you free, at my departure, to comfort yourself with the next stranger who happens to be shipwrecked on your coast. Be as kind a hostess as you have been to me ; and you can never fail of another husband.' "<sup>2</sup>

## XVII

Since the time of Dryden, the number of idioms in the English language has greatly increased, and in the nineteenth century in especial, very great additions were made to this part of our vocabulary. The study of our older literature restored to us not only words which had fallen obsolete, but also many old turns of phrase which had been half forgotten ;<sup>3</sup> and it was

<sup>1</sup> Preface of *All for Love* (Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, i. p. 197).

<sup>2</sup> *Dedication of the Aeneas* (*Ibid.* ii. pp. 196-7).

<sup>3</sup> Lamb's *Essays* are full of old idioms : in his use of these archaic expressions the careful student will find one of the subtlest manifestations of his felicitous and elaborate art.

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in this century, for the most part, that the great body of Shakespearian expressions became a part of the tissue of our language. Scott's novels made us familiar with many Scottish phrases; and from America, with its new conditions and the linguistic freedom that prevails there, many new and vivid idioms made their way across the Atlantic. The lexicography of the last century is made notable, moreover, by the enormous increase of phrasal verbs which, in that period, have sprung to life in extraordinary profusion.<sup>1</sup>

This remarkable and modern growth of idiomatic phrases in our speech is not without significance, and can be explained, I think, as a reaction against the deadness of much contemporary English,—the increasing use of life-forsaken words in that jargon of science and abstract thought which is so characteristic of the present age. And here perhaps we can find a general explanation of the curious linguistic phenomenon we have been studying, the function of idiom in speech, the part it plays not only in English, but in other languages as well. For the truth is that learned languages, having for their main object the naming of concepts, naturally tend to colourless abstraction. Representing the triumph of reason over the incoherence of immediate sensation, they embody the results of science in their vocabulary, and the laws of thought in their grammar. For the purpose of order and abstraction, they reject much of the illogical but psychological element of experience, the bodily sensations and the

<sup>1</sup> Many modern Americanisms, like "flareback," "rake-off," "frame-up," are words formed from phrasal verbs. To "listen in" is the latest verb of this kind to be added to our English vocabulary.

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lively feelings which accompany sensation, and all those reasons of the imagination and the heart of which, in Pascal's phrase, the reason knows nothing.

This element of thought which is rebellious to the laws of thought, which prefers images to abstraction, terseness to grammar, and energy to logic—it is precisely this illogical but living sense of things which looks out at us through the idiomatic loopholes in rational language, and speaks to our senses by means of those “colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations,” which, according to Dr. Johnson, sullied the grammatical purity of English. Plainly, a language which was all idiom and unreason would be impossible as an instrument of thought ; but all languages permit the existence of a certain number of illogical expressions : and the fact that, in spite of their vulgar origin and illiterate appearance, they have succeeded in elbowing their way from popular speech into our prose and poetry, our learned lexicons and grammars, is a proof that they perform a necessary function in the domestic economy of speech. That function, to put it briefly, is to bring back ideas from the understanding to the sensations from which they were originally derived ; to reincorporate them again in visual images, and above all in the dynamic sensations of the human body, its members, its attitudes, and acts. Idioms are little sparks of life and energy in our speech ; they are like those substances called vitamins which make our food nourishing and wholesome ; diction deprived of idiom—unless, indeed, as with Gibbon or Johnson, its absence is compensated by other qualities—soon



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becomes tasteless, dull, insipid. This is why an infusion of foreign idiom is better than no idiom at all ; and here perhaps we can find the explanation of the dullness of German prose, which, as Professor Earle points out, is so difficult to read ; German prose being, he says, of all forms of modern prose, the poorest, while French is the richest, in idiomatic phrases.<sup>1</sup> German poetry, on the other hand, being largely based on folk-poetry, is full of native idiom.

Idiom is held in little esteem by men of science, by schoolmasters, and old-fashioned grammarians, but good writers love it, for it is, in truth, "the life and spirit of language." It may be regarded as the sister of poetry, for like poetry it retranslates our concepts into living experiences, and breathes that atmosphere of animal sensation which sustains the poet in his flights.

"There is a smell in our native earth, better than all the perfumes in the East" ; and although our idiom contains, as we have seen, a deposit of metaphors and phrases from the popular life of Europe, its savour, its

<sup>1</sup> The idiomatic richness of the French literary language is in some degree at least due, I think (if the opinion of a foreigner can have any value in these matters), to the fact that the works of several of the best French authors—above all perhaps those of Montaigne, La Fontaine, Molière, and Mde. de Sévigné—were written in a colloquial style close to the spoken language, and are therefore full of popular locutions, whose use, save for the authority and example of these classics, might never have been sanctioned in French literary diction. The same service was performed for Spanish by Cervantes ; for *Don Quixote* is a book of almost endless conversations, and Sancho Panza's talk in especial, is a tissue, not only of proverbs, but of idiomatic turns and figures as well. Our idiomatic debt in English to Shakespeare and the English Bible has already been suggested ; our Standard English has also been enriched by many popular locutions from the conversations in Sir Walter Scott's novels.

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humour, its images and phrases are nevertheless essentially national in character, and taste of the soil from which they grew, that special portion of the earth's surface, that homeland of villages and fields and pastures, from which every form of national speech and national art has had its birth, and to which, for the renewal of its strength, it must every now and then return.

## APPENDIX

### SOMATIC IDIOMS

THE human head, with its hair, its eyes and ears and nose and mouth, is the source of more than two hundred idioms :

To keep one's HEAD,	To talk one's head off,
To keep one's head	To bite one's head off,
above water,	To beat one's head against
To lose one's head,	a wall,
To hold one's head	To throw oneself at the
high,	head of,
To hang one's head,	To put one's head in a
To break one's head	noose,
over,	To drag in by the head
To bring on one's head,	and shoulders,
To have a head on one's	To make head against,
shoulders,	To lay our heads to-
To have one's head	gether,
screwed on in the	To come to a head,
right way,	To not to know whether one
To have one's head	is standing on one's
turned,	head or one's heels,
To have a swelled head,	Head over ears,
To take into one's	Head over heels,
head,	Head and shoulders above,
To put out of one's	The head and front of,
head,	From head to foot,
To put into some one's	From head to toe,
head,	Off one's head,

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

On his own head be it,	To be black in the face,
Out of one's own head,	To set one's face against,
Over one's head,	To save one's face,
Over the head of,	To cut off one's nose to
Over head and ears,	spite one's face,
Two heads are better	- To pull, or make, a long
than one,	or wry face,
Head foremost,	To make faces at,
'Headlong,	To facesome one down,
Headstrong.	To facesome one with,
	To face something out,
To cudgel one's	To face the music,
BRAINS,	To turn face about,
To suck some one's	To put a good face upon,
brains,	To put a new face upon,
To crack one's brains.	To thrust, or throw, in
	the face of,
To tear one's HAIR,	To look facts in the face,
To keep one's hair on,	To fly in the face of,
To make one's hair	To change the face of,
stand on end,	Face to face with,
Not to ruffle a hair,	Full in the face,
To split hairs,	In the face of,
A hair's breadth,	To some one's face,
To a hair,	Upon the face of it,
Hair-drawn.	A facer.
By the sweat of one's	To keep in COUNTENANCE,
BROW,	To keep one's counten-
To knit one's brows.	ance.
To show a bold FRONT.	To show one's NOSE,
	To follow one's nose,
To show one's FACE,	To see no further than
To have the face to,	one's nose,
To have two faces,	To nose out or into,

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To poke one's nose into,	To have before one's eyes,
To turn up one's nose at,	To get one's eye in,
To make a long nose,	To catch, or strike, or take the eye,
To look down one's nose,	To see with one's own eyes,
To pay through the nose,	To see with half an eye,
To cut off one's nose to spite one's face,	To believe one's own eyes,
To count noses,	To look with another eye on,
To lead by the nose,	To keep one's eye on,
To bite some one's nose off,	To turn a blind eye to,
To put some one's nose out of joint,	To clap, or set, one's eye on,
To keep some one's nose to the grind- stone,	To shut one's eyes to,
Before one's nose,	To make eyes at,
Under the very nose of,	To see eye to eye with,
A nose of wax,	To open some one's eyes to,
A nosegay.	To make some one open his eyes,
	To throw dust in some one's eyes,
The breath of one's NOSTRILS,	To do in the eye,
To stink in the nostrils of.	To wipe the eye of,
	To pipe the eye,
To catch, or strike, or take the eye,	To cry one's eyes out,
To be all eyes,	In the mind's eye,
To have an eye to,	In the public eye,
To have an eye for,	In the eye of the law,
	In the twinkling of an eye,
	Under the eye of,
	Up to the eyes,
	With all one's eyes,

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

With an eye to,	To come to the ear of,
A sight for sore eyes,	To have, or gain, a
An eye for an eye,	person's ear,
A beam, a mote in the	To hold by the ear,
eye,	To send away with a flea
An eye-opener,	in the ear,
An eye servant,	To set by the ears,
The apple of the eye,	About one's ears,
Eyewash,	Over head and ears,
My eyes !	Up to one's ears,
All my eye,	A word in your ear,
Mind your eye,	As much as one's ears are
*More than meets the eye,	worth,
	Walls have ears.
To raise the EYEBROWS.	To turn the other CHEEK,
To hang on by the	To have the cheek to,
EYELIDS.	To cheek some one,
	To be cheeky,
To lend an EAR,	To give some of one's
To give ear to,	cheek to,
To be all ears,	To have one's tongue in
To prick up one's ears,	one's cheek.
To turn a deaf ear to,	
To go in one ear and out	Cheek by jowl.
of the other,	
To have itching ears,	To hold one's JAW,
To tickle the ears,	To stop some one's jaw,
To play by ear,	Jaw-breaking.
To be willing to give	
one's ears,	To lick one's CHOPS.
To have one's ears	
tingle,	To be up to one's CHIN.

There are many idioms connected with the lips,  
the mouth, the teeth and tongue and throat :

## APPENDIX

- |                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| To bite one's LIP,       | To condemn out of his       |
| To lick one's lips,      | own mouth,                  |
| To smack one's lips,     | To be the mouthpiece        |
| To keep a stiff upper    | of,                         |
| lip,                     | By word of mouth,           |
| To hang on some one's    | Down in the mouth,          |
| lips,                    | From mouth to mouth,        |
| From the lips outwards,  | In the mouth of,            |
| None of your lip !       | Through the mouth of.       |
| Lip-deep,                |                             |
| Lip-service.             | To show one's TEETH,        |
|                          | To set one's teeth,         |
| To open one's MOUTH,     | To get one's teeth into     |
| To keep one's mouth      | something,                  |
| shut,                    | To set one's teeth on edge, |
| To give mouth to,        | To gnash one's teeth,       |
| To make a poor mouth,    | To cut one's eye-teeth,     |
| To make a wry mouth,     | To escape by the skin of    |
| To laugh on the wrong    | the teeth,                  |
| side of the mouth,       | To hang on by the skin of   |
| To foam at the mouth,    | the teeth,                  |
| To make the mouth        | To be armed to the teeth,   |
| water,                   | To cast in the teeth of,    |
| To live from hand to     | To have the run of one's    |
| mouth,                   | teeth,                      |
| To make mouths at,       | To have a sweet tooth,      |
| To shut, or stop, the    | To fight tooth and nail,    |
| mouth of,                | From the teeth outward.     |
| To keep a civil tongue   |                             |
| in one's mouth,          | To hold one's TONGUE,       |
| To put words into the    | To bite one's tongue,       |
| mouth of,                | To have a smooth tongue,    |
| To take the word out     | To have a sharp, or bitter  |
| of the mouth of,         | tongue,                     |
| To take the bread out of | To have one's tongue in     |
| the mouth of,            | one's cheek,                |

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

To have on the tip of one's tongue,	To thrust down the throat of,
To keep a civil tongue in one's mouth,	To jump down some one's throat,
The gift of tongues,	To give some one the lie in his throat,
Tongue-tied.	To cut some one's throat,
To stick in one's THROAT,	It won't go down.

The body itself, with the neck, the shoulders, the breast and back, though not so rich a source of idiom, still provide a certain number of vivid phrases :

A good sort of BODY,	To have a young head on old shoulders,
To keep body and soul together.	To shoulder the burden,
To save one's BACON [body].	To put one's shoulder to the wheel,
To break one's NECK,	To rub shoulders with,
To break the neck of,	To lay the blame on the right shoulders,
To be up to one's neck in,	Shoulder to shoulder,
To get it in the neck,	Straight from the shoulder,
On the neck of,	Head and shoulders above.
Neck and crop,	To have on one's BACK,
Neck or nothing.	To turn one's back on,
To make a clean BREAST of,	To get one's back up,
To keep abreast with.	To put some one's back up,
To have broad SHOUL- DERS,	To break the back of,
To have a head on one's shoulders,	To back down,
	To back out of,
	To back up,
	To backbite,



## APPENDIX

At the back of,	To be of the same, or
Behind the back of,	the right, KIDNEY.
Upon the back of,	To hold one's SIDES,
With one's back to the wall.	To split one's sides.

To turn the STOMACH,	To have on the HIP.
To be unable to stomach something.	Hip and THIGH.
	To gird up one's LOINS.

From skin and flesh, from blood and bones and nerves and breath, are derived the following :

To save one's SKIN,	To freeze, or curdle, the
To change one's skin,	blood,
To be all skin and bones,	To make the blood run cold,
To put oneself in some one else's skin,	To act in cold blood,
To be ready to jump out of one's skin,	To thirst for blood,
Skin-deep,	To draw blood,
Thick-skinned.	To suck the blood of,
	To breed ill blood,
	Blue blood,
	Fresh blood,
To be of one FLESH,	His blood is up,
To make the flesh creep.	Blood is thicker than water,
	Blood-thirsty,
To be of one's own flesh and BLOOD,	Hot blooded,
To run in the blood,	Cold blooded,
To stir the blood,	To bleed white.
To heat the blood,	To be bred in the
To make the blood boil,	bone,
	To feel in one's bones,

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

To be wanting in back- bone,	To keep one's breath to cool one's porridge,
To the backbone.	To have one's breath taken away,
To strain every NERVE,	To breathe one's last breath,
To get on one's nerves,	To breathe freely,
To be a bundle of nerves.	To breathe again,
	To breathe upon,
To lose BREATH,	In the same breath with,
To take breath,	Under one's breath,
To hold one's breath,	With bated breath,
To spend, or waste, one's breath,	The very breath of one's nostrils.

Owing to the heart being regarded as the seat of feeling, idioms in which this organ figures are extremely numerous :

To take HEART,	To pluck out the heart of the mystery,
To keep heart,	To have a soft heart,
To lose heart,	To have a hard heart,
To take heart of grace,	To give one's heart,
To pluck up heart,	To lose one's heart,
To take, or lay, to heart,	To break one's heart,
To set one's heart on,	To eat one's heart out,
To have at heart,	To give heart to,
To be down in the heart,	To win some one's heart,
To search the heart,	To put in good heart,
To have the heart to,	To touch the heart of,
To be the heart and soul of,	To have one's heart in,
To warm the cockles of the heart,	To put one's heart into,
	To make one's heart leap,
	To do one's heart good,
	To find in one's heart to,

## APPENDIX

To have one's heart in one's mouth,	Next the heart,
To have one's heart in the right place,	With all one's heart,
To have a soft place in one's heart,	With one's whole heart,
To wear one's heart on one's sleeve,	Heavy at heart,
After one's heart,	Sick at heart,
At heart,	A searching of hearts,
By heart,	A change of heart,
In heart,	A heart of gold,
Out of heart,	Hearts of oak,
With heart and hand,	Bless your heart,
With half a heart,	Faint heart never won fair lady,
From the heart,	• Down-hearted,
From the bottom of the heart,	• Half-hearted,
From one's heart,	• Whole-hearted,
In one's heart of hearts,	• Heart-breaking,
Near one's heart,	• Heart-broken,
	• Heart-felt,
	• Heart-rending,
	• Heart-sick,
	• Heart-whole,
	• Heart-ache.

There are not many idioms connected with the arm and elbow, but of all parts of the body, the hand, with its fingers and thumbs and knuckles, figures in the greatest number of phrases :

To make a long ARM,	As long as one's arm.
To keep at arm's length,	• To have a free elbow,
To welcome with open arms,	• To have elbow-room,
	• To have at one's elbow,

<sup>1</sup> The military phrases "to take up arms," "to lay down arms," etc., are derived from another word, the French *armes*, which comes from the Latin *arma*, meaning "arms," "weapons," "tackle," etc.

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

To be up to the elbow,	To have one's hands full,
To rub elbows with,	To wash one's hands of,
More power to your elbow,	To return to one's hands,
Elbow-grease.	To take one's life in one's hands,
	To take one's courage in both hands,
To lend a HAND,	To tie the hands of,
To bear a hand,	To play into the hands of,
To try one's hand,	To win hands down,
To hold one's hand,	To have a free hand, or give a free hand to,
To stay one's hand,	To be the right hand of,
To hand in,	To have the upper, or whip hand of,
To hand on,	At hand,
To hand over,	At the hands of,
To have a hand in,	Behindhand,
To keep one's hand in,	From hand to mouth,
To lay a hand on,	In the hands of,
To take in hand,	In a turn of the hand,
To fight for one's own hand,	Light in hand,
To fold one's hands,	Well in hand,
To eat out of the hand of,	Offhand,
To do a hand's turn,	On hand,
To come to hand,	On all hands,
To have at hand,	On the one hand,
To have in hand,	On the other hand,
To be tied hand and foot,	On every hand,
To wait on, or serve, hand and foot,	To hand,
To force the hand of,	Underhand,
To condemn out of hand,	Under the hand of,
To change hands,	With both hands,
To lay hands on,	With clean hands,
To have on one's hands,	With a high hand,
	A dead hand,

## APPENDIX

<p>A helping hand,          A hand's turn,          A left-handed compliment,          A hand's-breadth escape,          Hand over hand,          Hand in hand with,          Hand in glove with,          Hands off,          First-hand,          Second-hand,          High-handed.</p> <p>To grease the PALM,          To have an itching palm,          To palm off.</p> <p>To stir a FINGER,          To burn one's fingers,          To have a finger in the pie, or in every pie,          To lay one's finger on,</p>	<p>To let slip through one's fingers,          To twist round one's little finger,          At one's fingers' ends,          To the finger tips,          My fingers itch to.</p> <p>To have one's fingers all THUMBS,          To be under the thumb of,          To bite one's thumb at,          To twiddle one's thumbs,          By rule of thumb.</p> <p>A rap on the KNUCKLES,          To knuckle under,          To knuckle down to.</p> <p>To pay on the NAIL (?)<sup>1</sup>          To fight tooth and nail,          A nail's breadth.</p>
--	--

Finally, there is the leg which, with the knee, and especially the foot, figures in many phrases :

<p>To shake a loose LEG,          To find one's legs,          To stretch one's legs,          To take to one's legs,          To be on one's last legs,</p>	<p>To stand on one's own legs,          To have not a leg to stand on,          To give a leg up,</p>
--	---

<sup>1</sup> This idiom is generally supposed to come from the note on certain pillars at Bristol or Lincoln, but the only evidence does not support this explanation (O.E.D.). It is more likely to be derived from the common French idiom, *payer rubis sur rubis*.

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

To leg it,	To put one's foot into it,
To pull some one's leg,	To serve hand and foot,
To walk some one off his legs,	To tread underfoot,
The boot is on the other leg.	To set on foot,
	To carry some one off his feet,
	To set some one on his feet,
To go on one's KNEES,	To cut the ground from under some one's feet,
To bend, or bow, the knee to,	To know the length of a person's foot,
To bring some one to his knees,	To follow the footsteps of,
On bended knee,	To come out flat-footed for.
On the knees of the Gods,	
Knee-deep in.	
	To cool one's HEELS,
To come hot foot,	To kick one's heels,
To fall on one's feet,	To take to one's heels,
To find one's feet,	To show a clean pair of heels,
To have one's foot in the grave,	To lay by the heels,
To have the ball at one's foot,	To come to heel,
To let the grass grow under one's feet,	Not to know whether one is standing on one's head or one's heels,
To put one's foot down,	At the heels of,
To shake off the dust of one's feet,	Close on the heels of,
To be tied hand and foot,	• Head over heels.
To have cold feet,	To turn up one's TOES,
To get up with the wrong foot foremost,	To toe the mark, or line,
To put one's best foot forward,	To tread on the toes of,
	To be on tiptoe,
	From head to toe.

## APPENDIX

The power of begetting idioms extends from the body to the garments which clothe it :

To talk through one's <sup>HAT</sup> . To cut one's coat according to one's cloth,

To take off the hat to, To turn one's coat,

To be willing to eat one's hat, To be a turncoat.

To hang up one's hat, To laugh in one's SLEEVE,

To send round the hat, To wear one's heart on one's sleeve.

To knock into a

cocked hat,

A bad hat.

To be in POCKET,

To be out of pocket,

To suffer in one's pocket,

To put one's hand in one's pocket,

To throw up one's CAP,

To put on one's thinking cap,

To put one's pride in one's pocket,

To be a feather in one's cap,

To have some one in one's pocket.

To stand cap in hand,

To set one's cap at,

To have a long PURSE.

To cap verses,

To cap an anecdote,

To throw down the GLOVE,

To cap the climax,

If the cap fits, wear it.

To take up the glove,

To handle without gloves,

To take off the

MASK,

To unmask some one

To draw a veil

To trail one's coat

To take off one's

to

W.L.

## WORDS AND IDIOMS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • To be, or stand, in some<br>one else's shoes, | To have one's heart in<br>one's BOOTS,     |
| • To step into the shoes<br>of,                 | To put the boot on the<br>other leg,       |
| To put the shoe on the<br>right foot,           | • To lick the boots of.                    |
| Dead men's shoes,                               | To wear the PETTICOAT.                     |
| That's another pair of<br>shoes                 | To be tied to some one's<br>APRON-STRINGS. |

The phrases "down at the heel," "on one's uppers," and "out at elbows," describe dilapidated shoes and garments; "to take the measure of" is a phrase from tailoring; and "to try it on," "to take the shine out of," "it won't wash," and "it won't wear well," are probably also derived from clothes.

THE END



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- [illegible]

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